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# **GLIMPSES OF HIGH POLITICS**







THE AUTHOR AS A HUSSAR IN 1877

# GLIMPSES OF HIGH POLITICS

THROUGH WAR & PEACE 1855 \* 1929

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF

N. V. TCHARYKOW

SERF-OWNER, AMBASSADOR  
EXILE

FOREWORD BY

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## FOREWORD

Shortly before his death in the summer of 1930, at the age of seventy-five, Mr. N. V. Tcharykow, one of the most distinguished figures in Russian pre-war diplomacy, wrote his Memoirs, which relate with lively interest the infinitely varied events of his long life. It was certain that even the rather slight accounts that he gives of the more important diplomatic events with which he was so closely connected would throw new and interesting light upon them, and the Memoirs contain several points of real importance to the historian. As an appendix to the eighth chapter, "How Russian Diplomacy made ready for the War of Liberation", Mr. Tcharykow, after narrating the earliest steps in the development of the Bosnian question, prints the actual text of the fateful engagements accepted by Russia at Reichstadt on June 26, 1876. If only the Austro-Hungarian Government of the time of Baron von Aehrenthal had cared more for the approval of European public opinion, it could have made out a much better case for the Bosnian annexation of 1908 than was actually presented; but the question is full of detail, and, apart from that, whatever the action of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Governments in the matter, their right to decide offhand and without public support the destination of purely Slavonic populations originally subject to Turkey had to be, and was, questioned by both the Serbian and the Russian public. Mr. Tcharykow, when dealing with the crisis of 1908-9, gives a detail of great interest which certainly was generally unknown at the time, but which might have been guessed. He states that, after Isvolsky's fatal meeting with Aehrenthal in Buchlau, "Stolypin protested with the greatest energy against Russia's giving her official consent to the subjection of two Slav provinces to German and Hungarian domination . . . and even declared that, if this negotiation was pro-

ceeded with, he would tender his resignation to the Emperor". Stolypin saw much clearer and farther than the diplomatics, and he secured the support both of his Finance Minister and eventual successor, Kokovtsev, and, after deliberation, of Mr. Tcharykow himself. It is known that in the diplomatic reverse of Russia, which was the issue of this episode, the Emperor himself gave way to the German threat, with even more reluctance than any of his Ministers, and it was realized everywhere that if the challenge were repeated, as it was to be in 1914, it would have to be accepted. Mr. Tcharykow writes: "By that time it had become quite clear that good relations between Russia and Germany could be maintained only if Germany undertook not to encourage any further Austro-Hungarian expansion in the Balkans", and he presented a memorandum in this sense to the Emperor.

The bulk of the book, however, is not devoted to diplomatic history. It begins with the liberation of the serfs and goes down as far as the Five-Year Plan of the Communist Government in 1930 and the attempt to collectivize agriculture wholesale. In almost the very first lines the author writes: "Serfdom produced Revolutionary Bolshevism; and Communist Bolshevism is now (1930) attempting to reimpose Serfdom on 120 millions of Russian peasants." This apt summary gives the full scope of Mr. Tcharykow's *Memoirs*.

They are written in better English than is written by most Englishmen; the author received his secondary education in Edinburgh. The style is remarkably simple and direct. It is also clear that Mr. Tcharykow, with his British education, assimilated the most fundamental of British ideas—in particular, a belief in liberty and democracy.

There is first a picture of the old patriarchal country life on an Eastern serf estate. Then comes the Emancipation. Soon after his entry into the Russian Foreign Office, Mr. Tcharykow obtains leave to take part in the Russo-Turkish

War of 1877, which was a national and religious crusade. His account of the close relations existing between officers and men is singularly suggestive of those which later prevailed through the greater part of the World War. This part of the book is particularly fascinating, especially the crossing of the Balkans in mid-winter.

The author now passes into Central Asiatic politics, in which he took a leading part, especially when he was the Russian diplomatic representative in Bokhara. All the detail of this section is also most interesting. He had close touch with two very eminent empire-builders, General Annenkov and Mr. Lessar, who, even when a hopeless cripple, was able, by virtue of his vast knowledge and resource and his splendid courage, to exercise a guiding influence over Russian Asiatic policy. The account of General Komaroff's practically peaceful conquest of Merv will also hold the reader.

Mr. Tcharykow concentrates on these earlier chapters in his life. Those which succeed are much less full; but his first-hand experiences at the beginning of the Bolshevik domination are illuminating, and are told with a natural good sense and simplicity. "Russia cannot be destroyed", is the burden of his Epilogue, and that is what it is most important now to remember.

BERNARD PARES

I desire to express my gratitude to Dr. James Oscar Boyd, who carefully revised my husband's manuscript, and to Professor Sir Bernard Pares for his Foreword. I should like at the same time to thank Sir Kay and Lady Muir and Dr. G. P. Gooch for facilitating the publication of this volume.

VERA TCHARYKOW

## INTRODUCTORY

When I look back on the threescore and fifteen years of my life, I see that it began under the shadow of serfdom and is nearing its end under the shadow of Bolshevism. I observe, further, that these two social and political iniquities, though apparently opposed to each other, are in Russia organically linked together as cause and effect. Autocratic and Aristocratic Serfdom produced Revolutionary Bolshevism; and Communistic Bolshevism is now (1930) attempting to reimpose Serfdom on 120 millions of Russian peasants. The immense majority of the latter being agriculturists, as were their ancestors, the origin and fate of both Serfdom and Bolshevism can be traced to the fundamental question of *land*, of its tilling and ownership. Why it is so will be seen from the following pages. But let me say here, as this is an autobiography, that *land* in the form of the broad acres I inherited from my parents and their ancestors in the Province of Samara, near the Volga River, decided also my personal life and work. Thanks to the labour of our serfs on our Bogdanovka estate, my father and mother were able to give me the best education that could be had at that time in Russia and in Western Europe. Later, when our serfs became free farmers of my land, the rent they paid enabled me, without worrying about money, to choose diplomacy as a career, to study at leisure and to do some research work in history and philosophy, to travel as much as and whither I liked, and to enter a regiment of the Guards, where I had friends when Russian youths volunteered for the War of Liberation in Bulgaria. Besides, my landed property gave me the rights, and imposed on me the duties, of Member of the Assembly of the Samara Nobility, and developed in me an active interest in the workings of our Samara *Zemstvos* (County Councils).

All this kept me continually in touch with the rising and

menacing tide of Russia's social and political discontent. I remember how, in the nineties, this feeling, though it remained indefinite, became general in Russian provincial life, while the authority, prestige, and steadfastness of purpose of the Central St. Petersburg Government began to grow weaker. Provincial governors of twenty years earlier, when my father was one of them, knew clearly what they had to do, and did it. Now one of them confessed to me that he had more than once awaited in vain instructions on important matters, and, failing them, was uncertain where lay his duty. Each time I came home after a year or more abroad I saw that the situation of Russian bureaucratic autocracy was growing worse; and outside it a new, so-called "third element" was rapidly growing in numbers and influence, made up of various smaller employees and agents of the *Zemstvo*. They formed a kind of very active second-rate *Intelligentsia*, and were nearer to the peasants than the nobility, to which they did not belong and whom they did not like. These men and women did much to prepare the way for the general strike and revolutionary upheaval of 1905. It was in those days a common feeling among us that "something is rotten in the State of Denmark".

During the twenty-seven years of my life which began with my entry into the Foreign Office in 1875, my diplomatic promotion followed an interesting and most satisfactory course. First came a year in Moscow as Attaché to the Archives of the Foreign Office, preparing for my diplomatic examination. I then witnessed the fever-heat of an unprecedented political Slavophil agitation provoked by the recent insurrection of Christians against the Turks in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and by the war declared on the latter in the summer of 1876 by Serbia and Montenegro. I saw hundreds of Russian volunteers, officers and men, start from Moscow for the Serbian front. Among these was, as we read in *Anna Karenina*, "Vronsky", the hero of one of

the greatest of Tolstoy's romances. Having also known personally both "Vronsky" and "Karenin", both of them now dead, I can tell their true story.

The violent but plausible political movement I have mentioned overwhelmed the irresolute and ageing autocrat Alexander II, and finally drove the Imperial Government into an untimely war with Turkey, followed by the humiliations of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. There was in this patriotic movement also a strong revolutionary under-current. When claiming the liberation of the Balkan Slavs from the Turks, Russian public opinion advocated implicitly the granting to Russia herself of Constitutional liberties. But this agitation was not deep, and it did not reach the Russian peasant masses. Russia was then ripe for a Constitution, not for a revolution. I remember how ludicrous it was to see the Russians, in occupation of Bulgaria, drawing up for that principality a most democratic Constitution, while in Russia Absolute Government was being rigorously maintained. Even the war with Turkey passed unnoticed by the peasants, as only about 200,000 men, including the Guard, were mobilized for it. None was called up from Bogdanovka, and I must say I felt rather small when, on reading years after the conscientious local annals written by our village priest, Father Titoff, I found the war of 1877-8 not even mentioned.

On being promoted Attaché to the St. Petersburg Chancery of Prince Gortchakoff I became a privileged witness of the *arcana* of Russian diplomacy, and experienced the extraordinary personal enchantment exercised, despite his seventy-eight years, by the Imperial Chancellor on those who approached him. He read, I dare say with an indulgent smile, a memorandum I ventured to submit to His Highness suggesting (in January 1877) a direct understanding with Great Britain concerning the Straits and Central Asia as the only means to avoid the approaching war. I was even

allowed to look behind the scenes of our most secret negotiations with the Vienna Cabinet stipulating the friendly neutrality of Austria-Hungary during our war with Turkey. This agreement was Gortchakoff's valuable contribution to the success of our War of Liberation in Bulgaria; but since it admitted the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Dual Monarchy it became the mustard-seed which by its unrestrained growth was later the formal cause of the World War. The original source of this menace lay in the blackmail practised on Gortchakoff by Andrassy in proportion as our war with Turkey grew inevitable and drew nearer. What he then achieved, to the ultimate ruin of his country, can be seen by comparing Prince Gortchakoff's as yet unpublished account of the moderate and equitable Reichstadt decisions reached by Alexander II, Francis Joseph, and their Chancellors on June 26, 1876, with the definitive Reichstadt Conventions signed but a few weeks before the hostilities began (see Chapter VIII and its addendum). Thus Austria-Hungary saddled herself voluntarily with the entire burden of the unassimilable Serbian provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and, proving unable to digest them even after forty years of unhindered rule, died in Versailles in 1918.

An interlude of campaigning in Bulgaria gave me six months of welcome intellectual repose and physical exercise, till a severe wound brought me home and back to Prince Gortchakoff's Chancery. The experience gained in this war made me a thorough friend of peace and of pacific diplomatic methods for the rest of my life.

Carrying the Chancellor's dispatches to our Ambassadors in Berlin, Paris, and London gave me, in the beginning of 1881, an insight into the pleasing and interesting inner life of diplomatists abroad. I also became in London an accidental witness of the obstructionist crisis provoked by Parnell, unsuccessfully, in the Mother of Parliaments. I returned to

St. Petersburg a few days before the tragic death of the Tzar Liberator and the miscarriage of the first draft of a Russian Constitution.

In 1883, after the magnificent coronation of Emperor Alexander III in Moscow, at which I was present in my Court uniform and as eldest First Secretary of Giers's Chancery, I began my active diplomatic work with six years in Central Asia. I set out for Tashkent, the capital of Russian Turkestan, through the Caucasus and Northern Persia, discovering the present highroad from Trans-Caspia to Meshed over the Goudan Pass, and observing the renascent prosperity of Khorassan, freed by Russia from Turkoman robber raids. I entered Merv under Turkoman fire with the slender detachment of General Komaroff in March 1884, and reconnoitred an alternative route from there into the Herat Valley. My father's death obliged me to return for a few months to Russia; but I went back to Turkestan, this time through Orenburg and 1,300 miles of desert and steppe with post-horses and post-camels, covering this distance in the record time of 200 hours. I carried with me to the Governor-General, von Rosenbach, in appreciation of my excursion to Merv, my candidature to the post of Permanent Political Agent in Bokhara, soon to be established there, and instructions for securing the peaceful accession to the throne of Bokhara of Seid Abdul Ahad, chosen, with the Emperor's approval, by his father, the reigning Amir, to succeed him.

Then began my diplomatic, administrative, and judicial work in Bokhara, based on the principle of amity, on reciprocal respect of treaty rights, on peace, and on the fact of Russia's moral authority—a principle first formulated by General Kaufman, the first Russian Governor-General of Turkestan, in 1869. He concluded with the Amir the only treaty which has ever existed between the Khanate and Russia, a compact of "Friendship and Trade", and left the

Amir politically independent. I found the Khanate still the same mediaeval fanatical Islamic State I had read about in the reports of the Tzar's envoys of the seventeenth century. The most important innovation was a solitary telegraph-wire, stretching from Samarkand to just inside the walls of Old Bokhara, built in 1883. But as a Russian railway was then being built by General Annenkoff towards it from the Caspian and was about to reach Merv, I was instructed by Zinovieff, who was at that time the talented head of our Asiatic Department and whom I succeeded later as Ambassador in Constantinople, to see what could be done with the Amir in the way of obtaining his consent to continue our railway from Merv through his Khanate to Samarkand and Tashkent. The second time I was sent to Bokhara I had the good fortune to negotiate with the old Amir, Said Muzzafer Eddin, and sign the Protocol of July 18, 1885, empowering Russia to build that railway under specially favourable conditions. This was done successfully and rapidly, to the great satisfaction and enduring advantage both of us Russians and of the natives, and without a shot being fired. I had a terribly hard time planning, founding, organizing, and governing the three Russo-Bokharan settlements, administering justice to Russians and to the extraterritorial foreigners in the Khanate, keeping the strictly Islamic Bokhara "dry" despite the Russian railway, assisting the heir to the throne to become Amir on the death of his father without bloodshed, and seeing the young Seid Abdul Ahad, the Reformer, follow our friendly advice and, on the day of his accession, abolish slavery in his State, close the infamous *Zindan* or underground prison of Bokhara, and suppress some hitherto antiquated and cruel forms of capital punishment.

Though I obtained leave of absence for several months after my first three years in Central Asia, and made a very pleasant and interesting journey to Russia and through the

Islamic Near East, I could not stand much longer the excessive strain of my varied and pressing duties, and experienced in 1889 a nervous breakdown complicated by malaria. I went to Paris, where I recovered, but I was warned not to return to Central Asia. A few months later I was appointed First Secretary of our Embassy in Constantinople, during the brilliant part of the reign of Abdul Hamid.

From Constantinople I was sent for six months as *Chargé d'Affaires* to Cairo, when Lord Cromer had just received a peerage, Colonel Kitchener was still Egyptian Sirdar, the Dervishes were camping at Wadi Halfa, and a French column was approaching Fashoda.

In 1893 I married in Constantinople Mlle Vera Ivanoff and was appointed Councilor of our Embassy in Berlin. During the three years we spent there I saw Russia and Germany drift wider and wider apart, the former in the direction of her alliance with France and of her *entente* with Great Britain, and the young German Empire entangled with "patchwork" Austria-Hungary and unreliable Italy.

From Berlin I was sent to Sofia with the mission to re-establish Russia's diplomatic relations with Bulgaria, and to convince this long mistrustful country that Russia's policy in the Near East was not one of conquest or annexation, but was based on the principle "The Balkans for the Balkan peoples". I was happy to visit some of our old battle-fields, and to see the prosperity and peace being achieved by that stepchild of West European diplomacy.

In 1897 I was promoted Minister-Resident, and went as such for three years to the Court of Leo XIII in Rome. I succeeded Isvolsky, who had recently renewed diplomatic relations between the Imperial Government and the Pope. There I obtained an insight into the "Roman Question", which was to remain for thirty years more an apparently insoluble tangle.

In 1900 I was sent again to the Balkans as Minister Plenipotentiary to Serbia, with the same mission of furthering friendly relations between her and Bulgaria, based on the confidence of both in Russia. In 1903 I witnessed in Belgrade the tragic fall of the Obrenovitch dynasty and the return to power of the alternating dynasty of Karageorge. Five years later, as Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs in St. Petersburg, I was called upon to help Serbia in her highly dangerous conflict with Austria-Hungary over the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina—a conflict which, when revived in 1914, developed into the World War.

In 1905 I was lucky in being appointed to The Hague, and in taking part in the Second Hague Conference of 1907, that “Parliament of Mankind” which was convoked by the Emperor of Russia and which was the democratic precursor of the League of Nations.

When Russia was granted a Constitution and Isvolsky, my class-mate and friend, became Minister for Foreign Affairs, he invited me to join him in his arduous task as his Political Assistant, helping him at the same time in his relations with our *Duma*. This appointment brought me once more to St. Petersburg, and I was there when King Edward, accompanied by Lord Hardinge, paid his visit to Reval in 1908, setting thus the seal to the far-reaching Russo-British agreement negotiated in 1907. Before the year was out I witnessed the failure of Isvolsky’s plan of a European Conference which was to amend the Treaty of Berlin by sanctioning the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary, and by securing for Russia compensation in the question of the Straits. And on March 10, 1909, I counselled and admired Isvolsky’s moral courage and patriotism when he accepted the hardly disguised German ultimatum obliging Russia to agree to the above-mentioned annexation “without any reserves”.

I ended my diplomatic service under the orders of Emperor

Nicholas II as Ambassador to Turkey (1909-1912), after flying to Constantinople a kite in the question of the Straits. On being appointed Senator and recalled to Russia, I retired to Bogdanovka, improved there the working of my flour-mill, and helped my peasant-farmers to some profitable improvements. In the beginning of the Great War I assisted the Bogdanovka womenfolk to gather in their good harvests of 1914 and 1915 without their men-workers. I also ground rye-flour for the Front. My family and the neighbours did what they could in Army supply work, and I opened a small Red Cross Hospital in my Bogdanovka manor, when our Government sent us hundreds of fugitives from Western Russia. I presided over local peasant committees for the housing and feeding of these refugees, and had the joy of finding the new generation up to the mark.

I have a good deal to say of what I saw during the Parliamentary and the Bolshevik revolutions of 1917 and during the German occupation of the Crimea. In 1919 I came with my family to Constantinople. There, and with the year 1930, my autobiography ends. But the Bolshevik experiments in vivisecting Russia continue, and my views of them are stated briefly in an epilogue to my long tale.



**P A R T I**

***UNDER THE SHADOW OF SERFDOM***

The heavy chain snapped . . . it snapped and struck  
With one end the master, with the other the peasant.

NEKRASSOFF

## CHAPTER I

### OUR SERFS AND THEIR LAND. OUR FAMILY LIFE IN MOSCOW (1856-1863)

“We belong to you, but the land belongs to us.” This is what Russians of the peasant class believed and what they told their masters before being freed in 1861. The same used also to be said in confidence to my father and mother by our serfs who lived and laboured on our hereditary estate of Bogdanovka in the Province of Samara, near the Volga.

That serfdom had become the bane of Russia and could not continue much longer was finally made clear by the breakdown of the governmental machinery during the Crimean War. Russia was defeated because the whole fabric of her inner life was based at that time on repression and oppression: repression exercised by the Government against the political aspirations of Russia’s higher classes; and oppression of the serfs by the nobility, the Imperial Family, the Church, and the State, who alone were privileged to possess them. Over forty-two million souls—more than half the population of the Empire at that time—were held as domestic and agricultural serfs. The personal situation of the Russian serf was not much better than that of the negro slave in the United States of America as described in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. And the Crimean War was lost by Russia, despite numberless acts of individual heroism and self-sacrifice, because nothing could prevail against the corroding canker of serfdom. As long as this system lasted Russian officers looked upon themselves, even in the field, as masters, and upon their soldiers as their serfs.

My family, on both my father’s and my mother’s side, took an active part in that war. In January 1855 my father, Valeri Ivanovitch Tcharykow, of whose life and

work I shall speak later, was on official duty in the Crimea, while my mother, wishing to be as near to him as possible, was staying in the South Russian Province of Ekaterinoslav. At the same time my maternal grandfather, Dimitri Azarievitch Poutiloff, was marching towards the Crimea as the commander, elected by the Samara nobility, of their contingent of the provincial militia. And an uncle of mine, an officer in the Army whom I often met later, lost a leg in the fighting at Sebastopol.

About that time the Allies were planning the landing of a Turkish expeditionary corps, under the command of Omar Pasha, on the Black Sea coast of the Caucasus. In Grigorievka, where my mother was, news was daily expected that this expedition had landed. I do not know whether it actually landed, but on January 20, 1855,<sup>1</sup> I made my not unexpected appearance in Grigorievka, and was in consequence nicknamed "Omar Pasha" by my mother's friends. Countess Helen Kankrin, who became my godmother, told me when I was grown up that I was a sickly, scrofulous infant. Certainly even some years later I was not expected to live long, and only after having been at school in Scotland and having roughed it in Bulgaria and Central Asia did I become really healthy and strong.

Near the time of my birth my father fell dangerously ill of typhus, that scourge of continental wars in olden days. Fortunately this happened in Simferopol, the capital of the Crimea, so that he was cared for in the house of the Governor, Count Nicholas Vladimirovitch Adlerberg, a friend of his youth. But this illness must have left him as a legacy some internal trouble, as a consequence of which he was ailing

<sup>1</sup> Since the time of Peter the Great Russia has used the Julian Calendar or "Old Style", the dates of which were in the eighteenth century eleven days and in the nineteenth century twelve days behind those of the Gregorian Calendar or "New Style". Thus January 20, 1855, New Style, corresponds to January 8, Old Style. I have used the Old Style throughout.

all the rest of his life and died at the relatively early age of sixty-five. Typhus was, my father used to say, a very tolerable disease, unaccompanied by pain. What helped him most was to suck lemons, but these were, of course, very hard to get in the Crimea in that time of war. As soon as he was able to move about he joined his family in Grigorievka, and then we all went to live in Moscow.

The first thing that I can remember—and this must have been in Moscow in my nursery—is a small room flooded with sunlight shining through frosted window-panes, my old nurse sitting in the corner, and, suddenly, a cock crowing outside the window. I must then have been only three years old, because I know that at four my mother had already taught me to read and write in Russian. My nurse was one of eight or nine domestic serfs whom my mother had received as a dowry from her father on her marriage in 1851, as was then the custom. These serfs formed our Moscow household. There were two maids, a man-cook with helpers, two menservants, and a coachman with a couple of stable-boys who served also as outriders when more than two horses were put to our coach. Many years later I was glad to meet my nurse again, when she could admire me in my fine uniform of the Imperial Alexander Lyceum in St. Petersburg. By that time she was, of course, free, but had returned to the Kankrin family, becoming the nurse of the Countess's eldest grandson, George Pashkoff.

My father and mother were kind to their serfs, and there was in our household an atmosphere of mutual affection, of peace and plenty, as I am happy to recollect. But the laws and customs of these primitive times were crude and cruel. Corporal punishment was lavishly dispensed in the Army, by the law-courts, in schools, and among serfs. I remember that one of our stable-boys was allowed to go and see the public flogging of a postman who had been convicted of theft, and that the same evening this boy was

himself flogged for something he had done or left undone. There was a familiar saying concerning men-cooks: "If there is not enough salt in the dish, the cure is on the table; if there is too much salt in the dish, the cure is on the cook's back."

To understand what harm selfdom did to Russian life one should read the first volume of Nekrassoff's poems, published in Moscow in 1856. The poet himself was an hereditary nobleman, owned serfs, and knew intimately what he wrote about. The tale is dreadful, and I am sorry to say, as I have heard from my father, the aimless and dissolute life described by Nekrassoff is a true picture of the life led by my maternal grandfather, D. A. Poutiloff, on his hereditary estate of Bogdanovka.

The following is a translation of what Nekrassoff writes in his poem *The Forsaken Manor House*:

Here again I see the well-known place  
Where the life of my fathers, futile and empty,  
Flowed in a course of banqueting, foolish pride,  
Gross depravity and petty tyranny;  
Where a crowd of downtrodden and trembling men  
Envied the fate of dogs and horses;  
Where the sounds of joyous bumpers and toasts  
Were echoed by the unceasing murmurs of suppressed suffering,  
And he alone was free to breathe and act and live  
Whose individuality oppressed all around him.

Under such conditions my mother, whose own mother had died while she was a baby, could not have had a happy childhood. Being my grandfather's only child, she grew up alone, cared for only by women-serfs. A miniature I have of her at nine shows her a pale, slender little girl with big, brown, thoughtful eyes, wearing the low-cut dress and the stays of the period, for she was born in 1835. She was sent to school in Kazan, the principal cultural centre of the Volga district, possessing a university, and also one of those Government boarding-schools for the daughters of the

nobility which were then opened in the principal provincial cities on the lines of the Smolny Institute in St. Petersburg founded by Catherine the Great, and which were something like the French *couvents* of the *ancien régime*. My mother's text-books and copy-books, which I found in Bogdanovka, show that she obtained a fair general education, and learned good French, but no other foreign languages. Her old-fashioned correspondence with her school-fellows makes interesting and pleasant reading, and reveals in her an affectionate sensitiveness. But there is no doubt that in her father's house she was in the way and unwanted.

My mother was fond of poetry, especially of the lyrics of Heine (of which there was already then a very good Russian translation), of Shevtchenko—our South Russian Burns—who wrote in the then fashionable Ukrainian dialect, and of Nekrassoff, that rising poet of Russia's "wrath and suffering". Her own poetical and lyrical gifts may have been inherited from her father, who wrote rather good satirical verses, which under the severe Press-censorship of Nicholas I remained, of course, unpublished. He also carried on a voluminous and assiduous correspondence with a good many friends. My mother's verses were brief, lyrical, and sad. A few were printed in 1859 in the *Russian Review*, the monthly magazine started by Katkoff. This notable man was then a young and liberal professor of the Moscow University, and his wife was my mother's best friend. He became famous later as the reactionary political adviser of Emperor Alexander III and editor for many years of the first really important Russian daily political newspaper, the *Moskovskia Vedomosti*.

My mother not only taught me to read and write, but also opened to me the doors of Russian and international poetry and prose, by giving me a book which I still cherish, the admirable Russian *Chrestomathy* of Galakhoff. This was then quite new and contained well-chosen extracts

from the best Russian and foreign authors. I was deeply impressed by the verses it contained, and remember when I was once asked at the age of seven or eight, "What would you like to be when you grow up?" that I answered, "Either a poet or a *boudotchnik*"—as those old-fashioned town-watchmen were called who carried halberds and lived each in a *boudka*, a small cosy house all his own, which seemed to me very attractive. And, instead, I have become a writer of Foreign Office dispatches and an exile.

My parents' friends in Moscow belonged principally to the young, liberal, intellectual, and literary set of men, of whom Katkoff was a rising luminary. I remember several undergraduates of Moscow University, some of whom wore blue spectacles, which in those days spoke of studious habits and advanced ideas. A law student named Passover worked with my father as his secretary. He was a Jew, and became later one of the ablest and richest lawyers in St. Petersburg as a specialist in questions of real estate. He always kept my father in thankful remembrance, who for his part told me that if ever I were in need of professional advice I could always count on Passover. When this happened, long after my father's death, I went to see him in St. Petersburg and found him an old but active man, in a fine apartment on the Neva quay, living with two spinster sisters and possessed of a splendid library. He gladly gave me the advice I came to ask concerning an intricate question of the law of inheritance, and lent me some rare historical volumes I needed for the book I was then writing.

Our mother used to take us children on a fine day in the spring for a drive in our open carriage to the Petrovsky Park—a park just outside Moscow and adjoining that Petrovsky-Razoumovsky Palace where the Tzars spent a devotional week before their coronation and from which Napoleon saw Moscow burn. The park was large but well-kept, and to this day I remember the pleasant sound of

the carriage-wheels on the fine gravel of the parked avenues. Fifteen years later, when I came again to live in Moscow, as an official of the Foreign Office, I loved to drive of an afternoon over the same roads, and listening to that sound reminded me of my childhood and of my mother who made it happy.

The house where we lived in Moscow and in which my mother died, so young, at twenty-seven, was our own, and was situated in the old aristocratic part of the city called Arbat. It was one-storied, with a mezzanine or low upper story, and had a big courtyard with accommodation for the serfs, horses, and carriages. From the lobby one entered a great hall with columns, a sunlit room where my sisters and I and our young friends used to romp, and where a huge Christmas-tree was always lit during the festive season. That was a merry time. Two or three cousins who lived in Moscow and were slightly older than I used to come, and also the Katkoff children, who were of the same age as ourselves. We were not allowed to see the tree before it was quite ready and the candles on it were lighted. Then my father would have a merry march played on the piano, the doors were thrown open, and the children entered by pairs. We usually dressed up for the occasion, and I remember parading once as a peasant of Ukrainia, while my eldest sister was dressed as a peasant boy. I took from one of my father's glass cases a short, red-clay Ukrainian pipe to finish off my costume. But, alas! I let it fall and it broke. I was not punished for this accident, but remember how sorry I was. My father and his father never smoked, nor do I. But my grandfather Poutiloff smoked long Turkish *tchibouks*, as was then the fashion.

During Easter week, when spring was drawing near, our mother used to take us to look at the *balaghany* from the outside. These were big booths, like the travelling shows at a British fair, with comic Russian clowns, all kinds of

pedlers and vendors of sweetmeats, much merry noise, and music of all sorts. It was a custom to buy little birds in cages and set them free. I remember very well the delights of those drives in the warm sunshine through the melting snow, and the dense crowds of holiday-making townspeople and serfs, the women wearing bright-coloured kerchiefs on their heads. There were many merry-go-rounds with heaps of children and grown-ups on the wooden horses. We saw also very high Russian swings, with gaudily painted wooden boxes holding two passengers each and revolving vertically to the accompaniment of brass bands, jokes, and laughter. Amidst these thousands of sightseers was a considerable sprinkling of tipsy men, an inevitable ingredient, at that time and later, of a Russian holiday crowd. These men, serf and free, bawled popular songs, mostly sad and sentimental, forgetting for a time the wretchedness of their lives and making the most of an intoxication they loved but could ill afford. Tipsy men appeared in the crowd only after the end of the services in the churches, when public-houses were allowed to open. The sale of vodka had become, under Nicholas I, for financial reasons, the monopoly of a class of men who farmed from the Government the monopoly of this sale and grew rich by adulterating, with police connivance, the spirits they retailed. One of the first reforms of Alexander II was to suppress this class, making the sale of spirits free and vodka cheap, on payment of moderate Excise dues. The reform was necessary and well meant, but as it coincided with the liberation of the serfs it led to a great increase of drunkenness—that abiding misfortune of the Russian people—among the peasants, who now had no masters to be feared or to control their conduct.

In the beginning of summer, after the ice of the Volga River had melted, we could undertake our yearly journey to my grandfather Poutiloff's estate, Bogdanovka, where we then usually remained till the autumn.

## CHAPTER II

A RUSSIAN BACKWOODS SETTLEMENT IN THE  
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Travelling from Moscow to Bogdanovka—a journey at that time by road and river of over a thousand miles—was not easy. Before the outbreak of the Great War it could be covered on the Trans-Siberian Railway in twenty-six hours; but in 1858 even the railway from Moscow to Nijni-Novgorod, about three hundred miles long, had not yet been opened, and it took three days more to go from there by boat down the Volga to Samara.

Thus we started from our house in Moscow, one spring morning, along the “Vladimirka” post-road in two carriages, a big four-seated one and a two-seated coupé, for there were many of us. There were my mother, a maiden aunt, my elder sister, myself, a younger sister then a baby, and three serfs—the baby’s wet-nurse, a manservant, and the courier, whom my father had ordered to see us through to the Volga. Being in no hurry, we stopped at will on our journey for meals and rest at some primitive hostelry near a post-horse station. Once we got out in a big village for lunch. Hampers of provisions, as also our tea-things and luncheon-baskets, were taken out of the carriages, and we were quietly finishing our repast while fresh horses were put to our conveyances. When these were ready and the coachman was in his seat, our manservant, having put a part of our things inside the larger carriage, which stood in front, slammed the carriage door with a loud bang. The coachman naturally thought this meant that we had all got in, and, whipping up his horses to a lively gallop, he sped away. Then all eight of us crowded into and onto the coupé and galloped off to overtake and stop the empty carriage. But the louder our courier shouted the faster

the first coachman drove, understanding the shouts to mean that he was to hurry. My mother was afraid that the over-loaded coupé would smash and crush the children. These, however, thought the whole thing great fun, and at last the runaway carriage was overtaken. A year later we made this journey comfortably in a railway carriage. A steamboat company called the *Volga* had already opened a regular passenger service on that river from Nijni-Novgorod to Astrakhan and the Caspian Sea. Although the boats were small, the three days' trip to Samara was even then as pleasant and interesting as it is now.

From Samara to Bogdanovka is a distance of thirty-five miles. At the time I am speaking of one had to drive there with horses along a bad country road, on which the rich black soil was rapidly turned by rain into terribly clinging mud. This road led over three hills, which are the ultimate spurs of the Ural Mountains in the direction of the Volga and of the Samara and Kinel rivers. From the last hill—that of Krivaya Louka, named after the adjoining village, of which more later—one could see the broad acres and fine forests of the Bogdanovka estate. This estate had belonged to our family since 1746, when the land was bought and his serfs settled on it by our ancestor M. A. Bogdanoff, whose name the estate bears.

I gather from our Bogdanovka family archives and from various printed sources, official and private, that M. A. Bogdanoff was a man of note and learning, one of those pioneers who carried Russian culture during the eighteenth century into the wilderness which then lay to the east of the Volga. His family belonged to the nobility of the Vologda Province, situated in the northern part of the Volga basin. The middle and lower reaches of the great river became the scene of his life-work. In his youth he appears as caretaker of considerable landed property and of the many serfs attached to it, situated on the banks of the Volga and

belonging to the famous monastery of St. Savva (Storogevsky) near Moscow, particularly favoured and enriched by the father of Peter the Great. Later he undertook some work on his own account by leasing some first-rate and hitherto untouched fisheries on the Volga and its eastern tributaries. In this way he probably became acquainted with the rich valleys of the Rivers Samara and Kinel. He seems also to have been the first to start commercial navigation, though of a very primitive type, up and down the Volga. When he became more generally known as a man of intellect, energy, and enterprise, he received an interesting and rather exceptional appointment: to be Imperial Commissary in the town of Stavropol, situated on the east bank of the Volga, on the confines of the Bashkirian backwoods and not very far north of Samara.

In the olden days the Volga was commonly regarded as the frontier between Europe and Asia. I think that in Bogdanoff's time this definition was about right. For the land beyond the Volga was then very like the part of North America beyond the Mississippi at the same period—a wilderness of plains, hills, and forests, mostly uninhabited. Two Asiatic peoples called Bashkirs and Kalmuks, who were essentially nomads, wandered there and also on the lower reaches of the Volga. It was with the Kalmuks that my ancestor was commissioned to deal. A number of them had recently exchanged the Buddhist faith to which all Kalmuks originally belonged for Christianity (Greek-Orthodox Confession), and were thereupon allowed by the Russian Government to settle down and live under their own feudal hereditary prince in Stavropol. Bogdanoff was put in charge of this settlement with the status of Governor, and instructed to colonize it with Russian merchants and craftsmen, so as to make it a self-sufficing Russian cultural centre. Besides, he had to administer the local salt revenue and that of the Customs duties applied to the local trade with Central Asia.

During the sixteen years of this administration Bogdanoff seems to have fulfilled his task with considerable success, judging by the documents which mention him and are printed in the Russian *Full Collection of Laws*. In 1746 he bought from three Bashkirian princes for one hundred roubles a great tract of uninhabited land, of about 100,000 acres, on the Kinel River, and then colonized it by transferring his serfs thither from the western bank of the Volga. At this same time the grandfather of Aksakoff, the well-known Russian author, bought and colonized with his serfs an estate on the upper reaches of the same river. Then Bogdanoff built the Old Bogdanovka Manor House, which has come down to me, and planted the large park which surrounds it.

The Christian Kalmuks of Stavropol became gradually absorbed by their Russian fellow-citizens. They have given to Russia some eminent statesmen belonging to the family of the Princes Doundoukoff, one of whom was Imperial Commissary in Bulgaria in 1878 and framed the Constitution of that country. The Buddhist Kalmuks, who lived farther south, retained up to the Bolshevik Revolution their separate national life and feudal self-government. At the coronation of Alexander III in 1883 I met their high priest, or head lama, wearing his sacerdotal robes and an authentic Phrygian cap, of the form which one sees on antique coins and which was adopted by the *sansculottes* of the French Revolution. Across his breast was displayed the broad red ribbon of the Imperial Order of St. Anna. And in 1922 I saw a number of Kalmuk soldiers in Constantinople who had retreated with Baron Wrangel's army from Russia and were working well under the British authorities of the Army of Occupation. They were a remnant of those thousands of their people who had joined the "White" Russians in their retreat before the Bolsheviks through the Kalmuk steppes of the Lower Volga. When they reached Novorossisk on the

Black Sea and saw that further escape from the Bolsheviks was impossible, they slew, on the shore, with their own hands, their wives and children, and then killed themselves.

I found in the Bogdanovka archives the original deed of purchase from the Bashkirs, and a map of the land drawn by a Russian military surveyor. The exact number of acres sold is not stated, but it was at least 100,000; for on this land six villages of serfs, besides Bogdanovka, grew up and flourished, and in 1861, after many family vicissitudes and apportionments, and after the emancipation of all our serfs endowed with land, my inheritance still amounted to 15,000 acres.

My ancestor, being aware of the risks of his colonization—because Bashkir raids were then as frequent as those of the Redskins in the backwoods of America—prefaced the building up of his settlement by transferring several thousand acres of the land he had bought to a military colony, or “land militia”, as it was termed in Russia. He thus formed a village inhabited by soldiers who had finished their years of active service, had married, and received grants of land in the unsettled border districts, on condition of helping in their defence in case of need. This village was called Krivaya Louka (Twisted Bend), because of the curious angle which the River Kinel makes there, and it became later a flourishing village of serfs belonging to the State (*kazonnyie*). Under its protection M. Bogdanoff built a water-mill, and, on a high bluff half a mile from Krivaya Louka, the Old Manor House of Bogdanovka.

When I first saw it as a child, the house was already about one hundred years old. It was not large, but the rooms were numerous, small, and cosy, with funny narrow stairs, dark corridors, and windows placed at different levels. Facing the flower-garden and park was a terrace with round white columns, in what would be called in America the “Colonial style”. In the garden were placed several

green wooden posts, to each of which was fastened a bell of glass, every bell tuned to sound a different note. Inside each bell was a wooden tongue with four long straight feathers attached to it, so that the slightest breath of air made the tongue strike the glass and emit a musical sound. When all the bells rang at the same time, it produced a curious harmony I have never heard elsewhere. There was also in the garden a big Aeolian harp, which, however, required a stronger current of air to make it play.

The door of the sitting-room opened on the terrace. Portraits in oils—not very good ones—of Catherine II and Alexander I hung on the walls. The family portraits were transferred by my grandfather to the New House he built in 1855. The furniture was of the Louis XVI period of French make, either original or imitated by certain of our serfs. There were also fine mirrors with ornamental mythological borders, and resting on rather unusual narrow tables covered with thick slabs of opaque blue glass. Next came the “coffee-room”, panelled with Carelian birch, which grows in Northern Russia and has a particularly handsome grain. The great sofa and several well-cushioned chairs were made of the same wood, and the door separating this room from the next was a full-sized looking-glass reaching to the floor. Against this glass I remember butting my childish head, thinking it was an open door.

This Old Manor House was accidentally burned down in 1900, but fortunately all the old and interesting furniture had at the time been removed, to be repaired by the last surviving serf who had practised this art. I hear from some American Friends, who were in Samara for the splendid relief work during the famine of 1923, that none of our Manor House buildings has been destroyed by the Bolsheviks, and that various objects of art and curiosities which had been brought to Bogdanovka by my ancestors, my father, and myself have been transferred to the Samara

town museum. The local Soviet is said to hold its sittings in the New Manor House.

I remember seeing my grandfather, D. A. Poutiloff, only once, as he stood at the entrance of the New Manor House to welcome my mother and her children on our arrival. He seemed to me a very tall and stout old man, with a thick gold chain on his multicoloured waistcoat. He had had placed in the Bogdanovka Park several large statues, of which I was rather afraid. The oldest part of the park, which sloped abruptly from the flower-garden to the stream and pond at the foot of this bluff, was planned in the formal French eighteenth-century fashion, with straight intersecting avenues of lime-trees, while the part higher up the river, stretching to the big orchard, was in the English style, with shrubberies and curving paths. Several fine oaks, over a century old, adorned the park near to the house. In the middle of the pond was the so-called "Island of Love", joined to the park by a bridge and containing an old-fashioned summer-house.

The dining-room of the Old House had walls of stucco imitating marble, the work of some specially trained serfs, and opened at one end on a long conservatory with lemon and orange trees, and a viney with good Isabella grapes. This conservatory led to the church, and I remember the delicious perfume of the lemon blossoms when walking through this long flowery vista to and from church. All this was something of a luxury in a land which from October to April is buried in snow, with blizzards and long spells of frost reaching fifteen degrees below zero.

I should like to give here some details of the life and work of the son and grandson of M. A. Bogdanoff in their pleasant and prosperous home of Bogdanovka, and about the way they made their rapidly multiplying serfs clear the surrounding forest and till the fruitful land. But this would make my tale too long. I must, however, say a few words

about the first two revolutionary attempts in Russia, one among the nobility in 1730 and the other among the serfs in 1775, both of which happened in the lifetime of these three generations of Bogdanoffs. Both attempts at revolution can be traced—like the further rise and development of revolution in Russia—to a single fountain-head: to serfdom and the tardy and unsatisfactory way in which it was abolished.

Russia lived and suffered for about two centuries, from the end of the sixteenth century till 1761, under a system of universal serfdom which was the belated but original Russian counterpart of Western feudalism. The rising autocratic Muscovite State forced upon its subjects universal compulsory service, in order to throw off the intolerable Mongol and Tartar yoke, achieve the unification of Russia, and defend her against her encroaching and dangerous enemies—Sweden, Poland, and Turkey. To attain this aim lifelong service with the sword was imposed upon the nobility, while the peasants had similarly to serve with the plough. To the nobles allotments of land were granted by the Tzars, with the necessary number of serfs attached to the soil, so as to give their masters the leisure and means to fight Russia's enemies in the field. Such subservience to the autocratic and absolutist Russian State was enforced, through dire necessity and with particular vigour, by Peter the Great. At that price, however, the aim was actually reached: Russia became entirely independent, had no longer to fear her menacing neighbours, and by the end of that Emperor's reign had attained the satisfactory status of a Great Power.

At the same time Peter the Great had spread enlightenment and Western culture among the Russian nobility. After his death, when a "Supreme Privy Council" was formed under Catherine I in St. Petersburg, the nobles feared the unlimited absolute power of the Crown and

attempted to obtain from the next Empress, Anna, for the members of this Council a *magna charta libertatum*. This demand was conceded, and Russia would have become an aristocratic constitutional oligarchy had not this revolutionary attempt to limit the powers of the Tzar in favour of a small minority been resented by the great majority of the Russian nobility, who persuaded the Empress Anna to retract the privileges granted. The leaders of the movement were severely punished, and the unlimited powers of the Tzar maintained, in 1730. There is, however, no doubt that if this Constitution had been less exclusive it would have been welcomed by the whole Russian nobility. Thus the nobility obtained no political rights. But its long and successful patriotic services were recompensed by the Emperor Peter III, who in 1761 emancipated the nobles of Russia from all compulsory service to the State, maintaining, however, their full rights of property in their lands and serfs.

New hopes of constitutional reform and political rights were awakened when Catherine II convened in Moscow in 1766 the famous "Legislative Commission", formed of 652 freely elected deputies from all classes and nationalities of the Empire, except the serfs, who had no vote, not being free citizens. This convocation renewed, in a Western form, the old Russian institution of the States General, which had fallen into disuse for nearly a century. The country responded joyfully and loyally to its Sovereign's appeal, as can be seen from the full reports of the proceedings published by the Imperial Russian Historical Society of St. Petersburg. The numberless evils of an inefficient and corrupt administration, which the Commission was asked to amend, were openly and honestly disclosed; and the Empress made use of many of the data thus collected in the laws she issued later. After working for two years the Commission was prorogued, under the plea of war with Turkey, without having broached the

two great questions that required a satisfactory solution: political rights for the nation and emancipation for the serfs. Some nobles spoke in the Commission about freeing the serfs. But these proposals were shelved, and the situation of Russian serfs grew ever worse.

Here is an example of the way Russian law looked upon serfs after the Commission had been prorogued. In 1776 Catherine published a very able, humane, and progressive law concerning the government of the provinces of the Empire. Yet we read in the Register of Provincial Authorities instituted by that law the following words: "The Ruler or Governor to receive a yearly salary of 1,800 roubles and *for his table 600 serfs*", which meant that besides his salary in money he became *ex-officio* proprietor of six hundred male serfs from among those belonging to the State and having Government land to till for his benefit.

The question of emancipation, however, could not be put off much longer with impunity. For twelve years the Russian peasant-serfs waited patiently for an order from the Throne setting them also free, since the nobles had been freed. No order came. So when Pougacheff, a Cossack revolutionist, calling himself Emperor Peter III (who had long been dead), promised the serfs of Russia "land and liberty" if they helped him against the Government then in power, he was joined by many thousands of discontented serfs. He besieged Orenburg and even Kazan, and was vanquished in 1775 only by a regular army and after nearly two years of warfare. Pougacheff was brought to Moscow and executed. But the injustice and the wrong done to the serfs of Russia in 1761 remained unatoned for and unforgiven. "Land and liberty" became the slogan of the Russian peasant till the serfs were emancipated in 1861, and long after.

The equilibrium of Russian life was upset when the nobility was emancipated while the serfs remained in bondage. Moreover, in the course of one hundred years,

during which this abnormal and dangerous situation was maintained, the social, material, intellectual, and moral gulf which separated the free and Westernized nobility from their enslaved and stolidly and primitively Russian peasants grew ever deeper and wider. Thus in 1861, when the freeing of the serfs should have bridged over this gulf and restored the equilibrium and unity of the State, the two principal partners not only stood distrustfully opposed, but had even lost the faculty of understanding each other, as if they no longer spoke the same language. In fact, since the nobility, obeying the reforms of Peter the Great, began to dress and live in another fashion than the peasants, even the mentality of the two became differentiated. This absence of reciprocal understanding, as also their mutual distrust, is reflected in the most notable Russian literary works of the nineteenth century. A tragic instance of this can be seen in the well-known fact that the common soldiers who joined in the revolutionary attempt of their officers in December 1825 believed that the "Constitution" which was clamoured for was the wife of the Grand Duke Constantine.

Even after the emancipation in 1861 this situation remained unchanged. The liberated peasants, as we shall see, took no interest in politics as such, but only in what touched directly their personal affairs, their houses, or their work on the land, losing more and more touch with their former masters, the *intelligentsia* of our day. It was as if a man with the mentality of the twentieth century were trying to converse with one having the mentality of the seventeenth. One of the newer literary productions which illustrates this situation is Tolstoi's play *The Fruits of Enlightenment*, produced in London in 1928, which shows the sturdy desire of the peasants for land and their puzzled contempt for the artificial waywardness of their masters, whom they fail to understand.

Pougacheff's principal successes were in the provinces near to and beyond the Volga, where he freed the serfs and hanged their masters, as Pushkin has described in his story *The Captain's Daughter*. Pougacheff's emissaries also visited Bogdanovka, but not being in force, they made no trouble there, but only requisitioned from our serfs all the horse accoutrements and harness they possessed.

At that time M. A. Bogdanoff's grandson ruled there. When he was ten he had been, as was then the custom and privilege of the youths of the nobility, enrolled as sergeant in a St. Petersburg regiment of the Guards, with the right to further promotion, but also with leave of absence to "finish his education". To do this he was sent to Kazan, accompanied by a German tutor who wrote very indifferent Russian but taught the boy arithmetic and other branches fairly well. But the boy had also a serf-nurse with him. The tutor, in a letter to the boy's father which I found in our archives, called the latter's attention most respectfully to the incongruity of a young man's being accompanied to church by his nurse while wearing his sergeant's uniform and bayonet. So the tutor ventured to suggest that another serf, if possible a man, be sent to Kazan to accompany the boy to church. As for the tutor himself, he could not go with him, because, according to an ancient rule, "If a church is entered by a foreigner or a dog, it must be reconsecrated".

This Bogdanoff did not, however, continue his military service in St. Petersburg, not being obliged to do so after the liberation of the nobility in 1761. He had a taste for literature. I have found in our library the works of Voltaire and Russian translations of many of the best French and English novels of that time. He spent his life in Bogdanovka improving his estate, ruling his serfs and growing rich. I have reason to believe he was a Freemason, Masonry being then widely spread among the Russian nobility, whereas,

on the other hand, his nephew, Aristarh Azarievitch Poutiloff (brother of my grandfather), was educated at the Roman Catholic College which exiled Jesuits had opened at St. Petersburg when Catherine II gave them refuge in Russia.

The Bogdanovka library contained some two thousand volumes. My grandfather Poutiloff added to it, among other French books, *Le Journal des Chasseurs*, to which he subscribed for over twenty years. I have myself read in it those monthly letters from Algiers by the French sergeant Gérard, the Lion-killer, telling of his adventures. "It is not hard to kill a lion," says he, "only you must fire before he leaps on you and hit him in the eye." My father and I always liked to keep our books with us wherever we went, and that is how my personal library came to be in Constantinople. But I stored in Bogdanovka my prizes from the Royal High School of Edinburgh and my German books on Socialism. After the revolution of 1917 the Bolsheviks declared the Bogdanovka library a public library. I am glad of this, because I hope that the books will not be destroyed, but I am afraid they will not be of much use to the Bogdanovka peasants, many of them being in foreign languages.

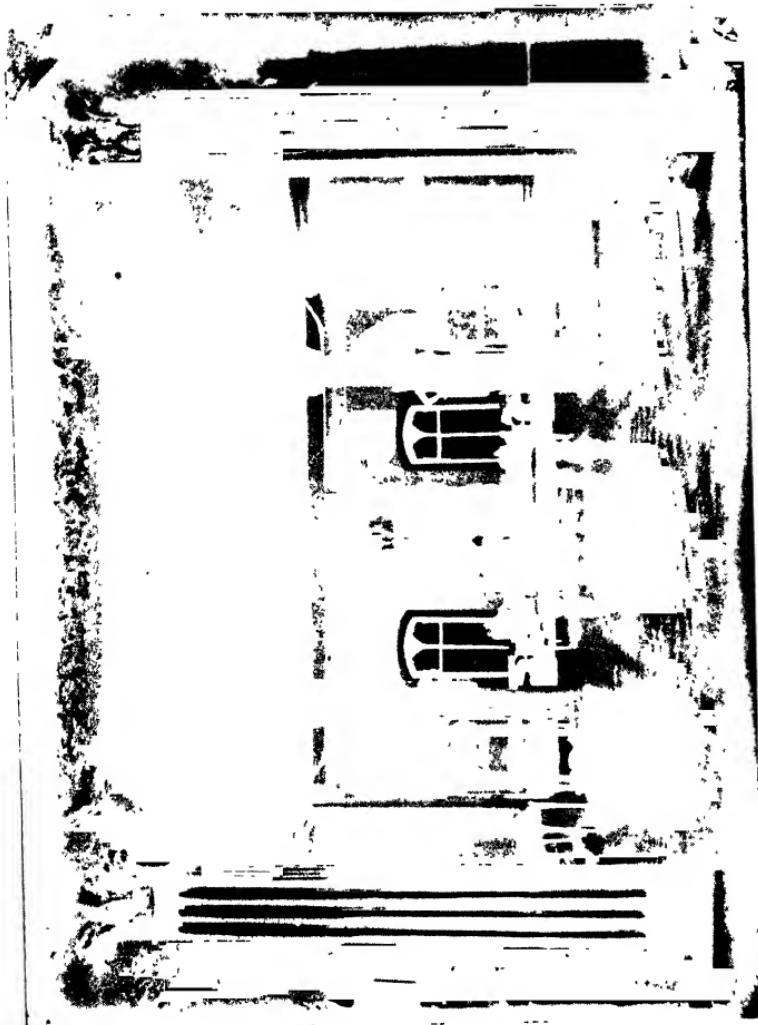
That last Bogdanoff died unmarried, so that the estate with all the serfs and other hereditary manorial property, which Russian nobles could not dispose of by testament, went to his only sister, Catherine Alexandrovna Poutiloff, who built the fine church next the Old House in 1828, and from her to her son, my grandfather. Of him and his serfs I shall speak in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER III

## WASTED LIVES OF RUSSIAN NOBLES

My grandfather, D. A. Poutiloff (1802-1860), lived and died under the shadow of serfdom. Serfdom set its baneful impress upon his whole existence, paralysing the good and developing the evil elements of his character. He may well be looked upon as a typical representative of his generation of cultured Russians. His misfortune, like that of other rich, healthy, intelligent, and active men of his class, was that he entered life with nothing to do. The everyday needs and comforts of these men were sufficiently provided for by the gratuitous labour of their serfs. But this privilege deprived such men of all incentive to work for a living, or for advancement, while access to public political life and work remained closed to all Russians.

At the same period, in the Southern States of North America, a landed and slave-owning society had the advantage of full political liberty and constitutional rights, which enabled its members, the contemporaries of my grandfather, to employ their energies, leisure, education, and means for the public good in their legislative assemblies. In Great Britain, France, Germany, and some other Western European countries in the nineteenth century, the social equals of my grandfather, especially if they possessed land, formed the backbone of parliamentary Government majorities, principally on the Conservative side, and helped thus to conduct the State in what was then believed to be the best and most beneficial way. It is true that in Western Europe and in America this political liberty had had to be wrested from absolutism by a series of successful revolutions. In Russia the revolutions of the nobles in 1730, and of the serfs in 1775, had failed, and absolutism of the new Western type, grafted by Peter the Great on the original Russian



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stock of Mongol-Byzantine autocracy, remained in force, denying to all Russian subjects political liberty and to the serfs even their personal freedom.

Such a state of affairs appeared monstrous and intolerable to the young Russian nobles who had marched through Europe to Paris with the Imperial troops, when Napoleon had been vanquished and France occupied by the Allies. When these officers came back to Russia and found no legal road to reform, political power, and the emancipation of the serfs, they formed several secret revolutionary societies, which took advantage in December 1825 of a sudden dynastic crisis, on the death of Alexander I, to start a military revolt in St. Petersburg and the South of Russia in the name of political rights for all citizens and of emancipation for the serfs. This so-called "Dekabrist" rising was put down by Nicholas I with great severity, and for thirty years thereafter, till the end of the Crimean War, unflinching absolutism reigned in Russia. Consequently that whole generation of the nobility and *intelligentsia* of Russia, to which my grandfather belonged, frittered away their life in love-affairs, aimless journeyings, and romantic duels, like many heroes of Pushkin and Lermontoff and these authors themselves; in perfunctory military service or in a useless flow of words, like Griboedoff's Tchatsky or Tourguenieff's Roudin; or, lastly, in such a life of dissipation and vice, in the midst of their serfs, as is pictured by Nekrassoff. Such was, upon the whole, the egotistical and useless life of the owner of Bogdanovka and its serfs.

D. A. Poutiloff was brought up at home and not sent to Kazan like his Bogdanoff uncle. Nor did he have a German tutor but a French one—probably that unidentified French *émigré* who was in some way stranded in Bogdanovka when fleeing from the French Revolution. He lived and died there, and bequeathed, as I have been told, to the Bogdanovka family a charming French Louis XVI clock,

said to have come from Versailles, in white marble and gold, together with several medallions in porcelain. This French exile must have taken up the teaching of French as a profession, just as so many Russian exiles have had to do since the Bolshevik Revolution, though we Russians can usually teach more than one language. I have myself given lessons in French, English, and German in Constantinople to the eldest son of the former Shah of Persia. What interests me in the case of my grandfather is that many Russian youths in those days imbibed, along with the principles of French grammar, those of the French Revolution also. But D. A. Poutiloff was an exception, to judge by his illustrated Russian-French school-book, which I found in the Bogdanovka library. This book was printed in Moscow in 1797, and is composed on severely *ancien régime* and anti-revolutionary lines. I think this stood him later in good stead, for when he entered the Army in St. Petersburg in 1817 as a privileged volunteer, and was transferred in 1819 to the Lancers of the Guards, the liberal political propaganda which was to lead to the Dekabrist revolt was in full swing. He, however, and his regiment were not implicated in this movement. Nevertheless, three months after these occurrences, Poutiloff retired with the rank of lieutenant of the Guards into private life "for family reasons". He then went to live in Bogdanovka, possibly because his mother died about that time and he inherited the property.

Many years later I met in St. Petersburg the aged General Volkoff, Aide-de-Camp of the Emperor, who told me that he knew my grandfather Poutiloff in the Lancers and had been friends with him. Poutiloff's gay, sociable, and adventurous humour made him a favourite among his brother-officers. He did not take his military duties very seriously and was nothing of a martinet. He had, however, a caustic tongue, which many feared, and which he used unsparingly when the fancy took him. His comrades nicknamed him,

instead of Poutiloff, Koutiloff, which means one who likes to go on the spree. General Volkoff remembered and told me many an anecdote concerning him. A good portrait of him in his regimentals which I possess shows him to have been a tall, handsome, and elegant young man.

That disposition to mock at people, and even to play practical jokes on those he disliked, D. A. Poutiloff carried with him to his home, and it grew stronger as he grew older. His neighbours and the other members of the local nobility feared him more than they loved him. He was never elected District Marshal of the nobility, although regularly chosen a candidate for Marshal. Thus, after ending his uneventful military career, he found that the elective career also could lead him to no active public work, advancement, or honours. Thereupon he sought solace in family life. In Simbirsk, then capital of the province which included Samara and Bogdanovka, he met at a ball in the assembly-rooms of the nobility the young daughter of a less wealthy proprietor of land and serfs, Mlle Larissa Vasilievna Roussinoff. He fell in love with her, and married her in 1832. The portrait I have of her represents her as very pretty and graceful, while a pencil drawing made by her speaks of her delicate artistic talent. After giving birth to my mother, and then to another little girl who died young, my grandmother herself passed away in St. Petersburg at the age of twenty-one. My grandfather did not marry again, cared little for his daughter, and lapsed into a state of misanthropic boredom which made him yet more difficult to deal with.

Looking again for something to do, he hit on a rather extraordinary idea. As a former cavalry officer he had taken nominal service in the Government department of horse-breeding, as correspondent for the district of Samara. The reports he sent now and then to the capital, which I have read, were interesting and often suggested reforms and improvements in the service. This work brought him

promotion in civil rank every four years. One day an order was published prescribing that those men who had graduated from a High School (called in Russia *Gymnasium*) should receive promotion every three years. Possessing no High School diploma, Poutiloff decided to obtain one, although he was then about forty years old. So he ordered his horses, his *dormeuse* or carriage in which one could sleep, took with him a whole household of domestic serfs, and set out for Kazan, a journey of about two hundred and fifty miles over bad country roads. In Kazan he rented a big house, which he kept hospitably open, and whither teachers of the various subjects in which he wished to pass came to give him lessons. He is said often to have made fun of these pedagogues. But being very intelligent and having a good general grounding and a tenacious memory, he learned his lessons easily and passed his examinations successfully. I have in our family archives the graduation certificate which was delivered to him at that advanced age by the Academic Council of the Kazan High School. I suppose that this escapade happened before my mother was sent to the Girls' Institute in Kazan, for she and her father were not in Kazan at the same time. I believe this diploma did obtain for him the more rapid advancement he desired. In 1840 the Imperial Economic Society of Kazan elected him as one of its fellows.

When M. Poutiloff returned to Bogdanovka he found something more to occupy his leisure. He decided to build a new Manor House, adjoining the old one, which he found too small and lacking in sufficient reception-rooms. I ought to say, however, that he spent a good deal of his time in the town of Samara, where he had one fine house, and went often to the Sulphur Springs, a fashionable watering-place, where he had three other houses. Before describing the house he built for himself, let me transcribe here what a man who knew my grandfather as a widower says of him

in a short memorandum I have in my possession, which throws light upon the manner of man he was. It is an estimate of one serf-owner by another serf-owner, and must be judged accordingly.

"I knew in the Province of Samara a rich landowner, Dimitri Azarievitch Poutiloff, who was very widely known. Almost all the country of Orenburg was in fear of his wit and humour. Here are some examples of it. Poutiloff possessed a one-storied house on the *Dvoriansky* (Nobles') Street in Samara. Just opposite stood the two-storied house of another landowner belonging to the Samara nobility, named Obouhoff. From the upper story of Obouhoff's house one had an admirable view of the Volga River. Poutiloff disliked Obouhoff, and always jeered at him when he was present and also in his absence. But such verbal scoffing did not satisfy Poutiloff, so he took it into his head to erect on the roof of his own house three very high wooden shields, painted to represent the upper story of a house, and was highly pleased with having thus deprived Obouhoff of his fine view. Again, when the serf of another landlord was driving a cart laden with a barrel of water along the street in front of Poutiloff's house, and the axle-trees of the cart, being unoiled, were screeching awfully, Poutiloff ordered his serfs to stop the cart and oil the axles with the needful quantity of birch-tar. Poutiloff's domestic serfs ran out in a crowd, stopped the cart, unharnessed the horse, and tarred the axles, while Poutiloff sat at his window looking on and laughing.

"Poutiloff decided to go and see the London Universal Exhibition of 1851. Such a journey in those days appeared a great achievement in the eyes of the inhabitants of the Russian steppes and of distant Samara. He began talking about his enterprise six months in advance, and so did Samara. Some were assured that he was only joking, as usual, but it was no joke. He borrowed 25,000 roubles (then

about £2,500 sterling) from the Government Land Bank, prepared for his journey, and went away. On arriving in Moscow, he hired an apartment of thirteen rooms, and began to live there as he did at home in his country-seat. Two months later he returned to Samara, bringing with him two extraordinary bronze candelabra. These were really wonderful candelabra, about 5 feet high, with a great number of candle-holders and most fancifully twisted branches. When the candles on it were all lighted the candelabrum looked something like a Christmas-tree.<sup>1</sup> It cost him 800 roubles, and this was all he brought back of his 25,000 roubles. After all, this journey was only a joke.

“But there is no doubt that in Poutiloff was reflected the new tendency towards a better treatment of the serfs. Although he had not graduated from a university, he knew how to behave in such a way that, if he only wrinkled his brows, his whole household stood on tiptoe. He was very good to his peasants, and still better to his domestic serfs; his menservants were chosen from among his orchestra of musicians, and all the men who served in the rooms and at table were violinists.

“These violinists, and especially Dimitri, Poutiloff’s favourite, who played the first violin, were really artists in the way they did their service. He did not need to give them orders—they knew their master’s habits better than their violins, and read Poutiloff like a score, understanding each glance and the tone of his voice, and divined his thoughts. This, of course, was not easy to attain, and I do not know which is here the more to be admired—the art with which authority exercised such a magic spell, or the power to subjugate men to such an extent.”

Another serf-owner who knew Poutiloff intimately used

<sup>1</sup> This description is quite accurate. The candelabra stood in my grandfather’s reception-room, in the photograph of which may be seen one branch of each of them with a candle in it.

to say of him that he hated and persecuted in men every kind of affectation or snobbishness, and made use, in so doing, of his talent for discovering and disclosing the comic side of all he saw. I may add that the facts of his life show him to have been the inveterate enemy of injustice, dishonesty, and graft, which were customary in Russia in the days of Gogol's "Revisor". My grandfather never hesitated to use his wit and sarcasm against the culprits, even if they occupied the highest positions in the local government service.

As to those serfs whom Poutiloff had trained to be musicians, they formed an orchestra which was the best of all those belonging to Samara landholders, as I have read in the memoirs of a contemporary traveller who heard this orchestra play during the summer season at the "Sulphur Springs". My grandfather trained his chosen serfs not only to music, but also, for his own pleasure, in the industrial arts, such as sculpture, the making of plaster-casts, house-decoration, painting, upholstery, and woodcarving. These local artists helped him in ornamenting his new Manor House.

The ornaments made for it in plaster of Paris were in the style of the French Empire, which was then still fashionable in Russia, and adorned the ceiling and cornices of the principal rooms. These were in white and gold, as was the coat-of-arms of the Poutiloff family in the centre of the gun-room ceiling. His serfs made also many copies of statues, busts, and statuettes which adorned his house, such as a life-sized Venus, the Ariadne of the Vatican Museum, the group of Laokoön, and a large bust of Schiller. Thirty years after the emancipation one of these former serfs was still alive in Bogdanovka, and repaired for me, to perfection, the frieze of one of the columns which had somewhat subsided. Another renovated equally well some of the eighteenth-century furniture, and yet another made some very fine carved wooden frames for the Ikons my father

and I placed in the family mortuary chapel of Bogdanovka, where many of our ancestors are buried.

The Bogdanovka reception-room is 93 feet long, with a parquet floor as in the other main rooms, and has windows on both sides. It is divided by slender Corinthian columns into three sections of equal size. First comes the gun-room or armoury, with a fine collection of old and new fire-arms, including some excellent English fowling-pieces engraved with my grandfather's name. He was a very good sportsman and shot, but was too heavy to ride. He had, however, several packs of hounds, which were well cared for. He brought back from his Crimean campaign some French military képis, rifles, and several Cossack lances. The only picture in oils, painted by a serf-artist, represents my grandfather at one of his autumn shooting-parties. On the edge of a wood a camp is pitched with several hemispherical felt tents for the master and his friends. A steaming iron field-kitchen is in the foreground, with the cook busy about it. In the middle of the picture Poutiloff is seen standing, wearing a fur-lined greatcoat and warm top-boots. Several huntsmen-serfs, in uniform coats and caps, are sitting or lying about, smoking short pipes and surrounded by their dogs, waiting for supper. It is a peaceful and animated scene, in which the artist did not venture to paint his master's face, fearing to displease him, but shows him standing with his back to the observer. A similar scene is portrayed in a pretty little water-colour of 1851 by a Swiss artist who happened to visit Bogdanovka. It gives a good portrait of Poutiloff and three or four of his relatives and friends, with a really fine bag of game. In the armoury one could also see a small brass cannon on wheels, dating from the time of Pougacheff.

In the second part of the room my grandfather placed his library, of which I have already spoken. There stood also a small rosewood harpsichord, with very yellow little

ivory keys, on which some of our ancestresses must have played. Next to it one saw an odd round revolving looking-glass, with one side convex and the other concave. On the first day of the annual Bogdanovka fair my grandfather allowed all his serfs to enter the new Manor House and wonder at its rooms and what they contained. He liked to puzzle the peasant women by making them look at the "magic" distortion produced by the convex mirror, which made them appear enormously long and thin, and then by the concave mirror, in which they appeared short and fat. This they attributed to witchcraft. Near the window a heavy iron anchor was suspended to a big piece of natural magnetic iron from the Urals, and the two were actually hard to tear apart. Before a broad and tall French eighteenth-century looking-glass were placed the French clock and the bronze busts of Voltaire and of Derjavin, the leading Russian poet of Catherine II's time. Whenever Poutiloff entertained guests in this room, a boy serf was always kept standing near each of the four columns, ready to light or to replenish the long *tchibouk* pipes with cherrywood stems which the guests smoked.

Some glass cases contained all kinds of curiosities, among them a tin flask of water my father brought home from the Dead Sea in 1842, a small black hand of an Egyptian mummy, a big ostrich egg like those suspended in the mosques in Constantinople, and an enormous lobster-claw. My wife and I later contributed to those cases some lava from Vesuvius in which copper coins had been embedded, and various other souvenirs and relics of our travels. Some interesting fossils, among them the tooth of an elephant found in the Kinel River, were also there. I made a present of the whole to Dorpat University, but I have been told that the contents of these cases have now been sent by the Bolsheviks to the Samara Museum, which used to bear the name of the Tzar Liberator, Alexander II.

In the third part of the reception-room stood my grandfather's immense writing-table, with a high-backed, profusely cushioned easy chair to match. On either side of the room stood two almost life-size plaster casts of a Ural Cossack and of a young Ural woman dancing. On the wall hung family portraits, and on the writing-table stood various interesting objects: a collection, in the form of a hill, with a cave inside of it, of all the minerals, stones, and crystals of the Ural. This was a valuable and scientifically important collection. An Albanian under a glass bell, wearing a white turban and a blue embroidered jacket, was evidently a souvenir of the Greek insurrection of 1821-1829, as was also a fire-screen with a Greek Palicar galloping on a fiery horse, embroidered in silks by some Bogdanovka lady. On an ancient roll-top desk were placed a number of coloured plaster statuettes of celebrated Russian actors. A big human skull, with the phrenological mapping in which Auguste Comte believed, reminded one of a long-abandoned superstition. At the end of the room stood a mechanical organ which, when repaired by my German tutor, played some operatic music of olden days. I must also mention the numerous working models of agricultural machinery which my grandfather had had brought from abroad and which were of no practical use. I remember also how my tutor explained to me the electrical machines of various kinds kept in that room, among them a model of the first electric telegraph. All that was newest of a technical character in house-building was introduced into this Manor House—for instance, a system of central heating, then practically unknown.

As the highroad from Samara to Orenburg passed through Poutiloff's lands and only a few miles from Bogdanovka, he provided the Government post-horses on a part of this road, and had given orders to invite all interesting travellers to come to his house before obtaining horses for their further

journey. It happened that my father was travelling to Orenburg on duty in 1851, and when he arrived at the Bogdanovka post-station he was astonished at this almost compulsory offer of hospitality. Being young and full of energy, and wishing to have a look at such a curious specimen of a host, my father went to see D. A. Poutiloff. They at once took a liking to each other. My father, being Gentleman-in-Waiting at the Imperial Court, could give M. Poutiloff the latest city and Court news, while the host greatly interested his guest by his eccentric mentality, powerful will, and perfect household organization. He presented my father to Mlle Adelaide Poutiloff, his only daughter, who made such a deep impression on him that he stopped for four days in Bogdanovka and promised to come again on his way back. On that return journey he proposed to my mother, who accepted him, and they were married in the summer of the same year.

Three years later the Crimean War tolled the knell of pre-reform Russia, and gave my grandfather a last occasion to serve his country in the field with the Samara militia, as I have already mentioned. However, in this case again, the absence of railways and other up-to-date means of communication made itself felt to Russia's detriment. Having to make more than a thousand miles on foot, the Samara militia had only managed to reach Kursk, not more than half-way to Sebastopol, when peace was signed in Paris.

When reforms began, the first and most urgent was the emancipation of the serfs. My grandfather received from my father full information concerning the progress of that measure, and thus came to know almost a year beforehand that the reform was irrevocably decided. But D. A. Poutiloff, good though he was to his serfs, could not grasp the idea that he would have to treat them, not as serfs, but as free men, and himself be treated by them accordingly. He could

not bear that one of his peasants should meet him and not bow before him. So, rather than risk such a scandalous occurrence, he resolved to go to England. He reached St. Petersburg, but had to wait there a long time for a passport. While he waited, the heart trouble and dropsy which had been aggravated by the emotions of the impending crisis, following on a life of ease and self-indulgence, grew rapidly worse. He died in St. Petersburg on October 20, 1860, at the age of fifty-eight, practically of a broken heart, only a few months before the emancipation which killed him was officially made public.

## CHAPTER IV

## HOW OUR SERFS WERE FREED AND WHAT CAME OF IT

It was a great day when, in the spring of 1861, our domestic serfs in Moscow asked my father's permission to go to our Parish Church and listen to the Tzar's manifesto proclaiming the emancipation of the serfs. This manifesto, signed by Emperor Alexander II on February 19/3 March, 1861, the sixth anniversary of his accession to the throne, was read to the Russian people, the great majority of whom were illiterate, in all the churches of the Empire. Copies of the text were distributed broadcast to all the inhabitants of the realm. Yes, that was a great day, and the peasants listened to the Imperial words at first with a feeling of extreme joy. Thenceforth no man, woman or child could be bought or sold by any master. All could work or not as they liked. All could marry when and whom they chose. No master could exile anyone to Siberia, nor at his own will compel a peasant to become a soldier. God and the Tzar were thanked for this from the fullness of the liberated serf's heart.

But here the serfs' joy and approval stopped. What they had always wanted and proclaimed during the Pougacheff upheaval was "land and liberty"—all the land they tilled and complete freedom. Now the law of emancipation of 1861 gave them neither, in the measure they had hoped and expected. Domestic serfs, of whom there were then some 1,200,000, obtained no land at all, and after two years' further dependence on their masters were left to shift for themselves. The agricultural serfs were given the option to buy, if they wished, from their former owners a fixed portion of land, while each received gratuitously only his house and the plot on which it stood. Of such serfs there were 23,000,000, belonging to 120,000 masters. All the rest of the serfs belonged to the Imperial Family or to the

State, and were liberated according to special laws along analogous lines.

The price of the land which the serfs could buy was fixed by law for each province of the Empire, and was not high. The Government issued bonds with which it paid the proprietors for the land sold to the peasants, and the latter paid these sums back to the Treasury by yearly instalments running through sixty years. Even after this, however, the land was not to become the private and hereditary property of the individual peasant who had paid for it: it was merely to belong to the village community—an ancient institution which the Russian people possess in common with other primitive races of Europe and India. Such communal landed property was liable to periodical redistribution by a majority vote, and was not what the peasants meant to obtain when they said, "The land belongs to us." The Russian peasant's idea is that the true source of the right of property in land is not conquest—which is the doctrine of Roman and Feudal Law—but labour; that neither the sword nor money makes a man proprietor of the soil, but the plough. This principle is somewhat similar to that of Islamic Law, according to which land becomes the private property only of the man who tills it, and then only as long as he tills it. From this one can understand why in common with all Russian peasants our Bogdanovka peasants were disillusioned and dissatisfied with the law of 1861, and that this law sowed among the liberated serfs those revolutionary tares which were to ripen in 1905 and to be garnered by the Bolsheviks in October 1917.

So much for the first disappointment of the peasant. But his demand for *liberty* did not meet with a much better response. Abolished were indeed the arbitrary but mostly well-intentioned powers of the old serf-owner, but in their place the emancipated peasant was subjected to the arbitrary, distant, and unfeeling rule of the bureaucracy and of the

police. Besides, taxes had now to be paid directly by the village community, whose members were made collectively responsible for these payments. Thus the rich, thrifty, hard-working peasants—whom the Bolsheviks call *koulak*—had to pay for the poor and idle ones. Any peasant could be arbitrarily imprisoned for three days by any officer of the police, and the very broad measure of administrative self-government which the law of 1861 granted to the village community was placed under the unsatisfactory control of the local government administration. The *mir* had the right, indeed, to elect its own officers and judges; but the latter were debarred from applying the codified civil laws which extended to all other classes of Russian citizens, and had the right to apply the uncodified law of usage only.

This certainly was not the “liberty” which the Russian peasants had been so long awaiting. Many of them refused to believe that the manifesto which had been read to them really emanated from the Tzar, their “Little Father”. Many suspected, further, that the veritable will of His Majesty had been concealed from the peasants, and that there would some day be a new repartition of the land. Alexander II had himself had certain misgivings on this subject as far back as 1858, and had then asked what would happen “if the people were to become disappointed on seeing that the liberty granted them was not up to their hopes and expectations”. In 1861 and 1862 the Tzar Liberator declared publicly to deputations of former serfs: “There will be no other act of emancipation but the one I have given you.” Even these personal affirmations, however, did not dissipate the peasants’ doubts, nor put an end to their further anticipations. Nor did an official circular issued later by the Minister of the Interior have the desired effect. So late as at the coronation of Alexander III in 1883 I heard the Emperor repeat to a peasant delegation word for word his father’s language quoted above, and

exhort the peasants not to believe that there would be any new repartition of land.

I must add that the administrative autonomy and self-government of village communities was extended to all the peasants of the Empire, although in some parts of it, as in Little Russia (Ukrainia), serfdom had only been introduced under Catherine II, and there was no communal but only individual landed proprietorship among the peasants. The same was the case in Georgia. Now, in both these borderlands Bolshevism has found much more difficulty in enrolling the peasants on its side than in "Great Russia". In Georgia the former serfs who had become peasant proprietors helped their former masters to resist for two years by force of arms the military invasion of the Bolsheviks, whose ultimate success there was due to the help of the Ossetes, an immigrant Caucasian tribe of agricultural proletarians.

Whether good, bad, or indifferent, the emancipation law of 1861 had to be put through and practically applied. The Emperor meant it to be a compromise between the vital interests of the nobility—the mainstay of his throne—and the vital needs of the peasants—the immense majority of his subjects. I believe that this law was, under the circumstances, the best that could be elaborated, and that no one could then foresee its ultimate miscarriage. Alexander II insisted on its being rapidly and absolutely enforced, and he was helped in this great undertaking by the best men of his Empire.

In Samara, whither my father was called by his urgent duty to his family, he found also a new and highly interesting field for public, if not political, life and work, opened by the liberal reforms of the new reign for all men of good will, and particularly for the liberal-minded members of the nobility—to which category my father belonged. I shall speak here only briefly of my father, since his biography

was printed in full in the Russian *Biographical Dictionary* (1905), published by the Imperial Russian Historical Society.

Our Tcharykow ancestors possessed lands and serfs as far back as 1649 in the district of Shatzk, later Tamboff. My direct ancestor, Stephen S. Tcharykow, received from the father of Peter the Great in 1675 a part of the land he had been holding conditionally in full hereditary possession, in recognition of distinguished services rendered during the war with Poland when Vilna was taken by the Tzar's troops. He and eleven men of the same family served in 1677-8 in the cavalry regiment commanded by a Scottish officer, Colonel Paul Menzies of Pitfodels.<sup>1</sup> This regiment took part in the war with Turkey, which ended with the evacuation by the Turks of the South Russian city of Tchiguirin.

After graduating with high honours from the Pavlovsky Military Corps in St. Petersburg in 1837, my father (1818-1884) entered as Sub-Lieutenant the Izmailovsky Infantry Regiment of the Guard. He saw active service in the Caucasus and was wounded there by a bullet in the left arm. He travelled often and far, in the Near East, in Western Europe, and even in North America, whence he brought back to Bogdanovka a coloured lithograph of Niagara Falls, then, of course, in a state of nature. From New York he sent in his resignation from active service—a thing which, I suppose, never happened to an officer of the Guards either before or after. But my father liked doing original things. He retired from the Army with the rank of Major in 1845 and entered the Civil Service in the Department of Posts,

<sup>1</sup> When I was Minister in Rome I wrote a book about this Menzies. He had been sent by the Tzar as Envoy to the Pope in 1673, and is supposed to have been tutor to Peter the Great. The book was published in Russian in St. Petersburg in 1905, and an epitome in French and Italian appeared in Rome in the *Cosmos Catholicus*. The Imperial Academy of Sciences granted this work the lesser Ouvaroff prize.

which was then attached to the Ministry of the Emperor's Household. In 1849 he was appointed Gentleman-in-Waiting of the Imperial Court. His duties in the Postal Department, which maintained all over the Empire the only then existing regular postal communications, took him all over Russia and even Siberia, as far as Kamschatka and the town of Kiahta on the Chinese frontier. During the Crimean War he was Field Director of Postal Communications of the Crimean Army, and wrote private letters from the seat of war describing those administrative deficiencies and depredations which caused our defeat. These letters are mentioned with sympathy and approval in the lately published diary of Mlle Tiutcheff, Lady-in-Waiting to Empress Maria Alexandrovna, the wife of Emperor Alexander II. Under the then existing circumstances, with the whole Russian Press gagged, letters of this kind could not be printed, but were more or less widely circulated in manuscript copies.

In 1863 my father was invited by the Government to become a member of the Samara Provincial Court of Peasant Affairs. This court was entrusted with the supervision of all the provincial institutions which were engaged in putting in practice the emancipation law of 1861. Before leaving Moscow my father remarried. His second wife was Mlle Maria Dimitrievna Zasetsky, daughter of a Lieutenant-General, formerly of the Life-Guard Hussar Regiment. No children were born of this union, but my stepmother was my father's constant and devoted companion in all his further administrative migrations and continual travels.

In this Samara office one of my father's colleagues was the famous opposition writer, Youri Fedorovitch Samarin, also a landed proprietor of our province and one of the leading public men of Russia. His family, like those of Aksakoff, Kosheloff, and many other distinguished members of the nobility hailing principally from Moscow, was poli-

tically "Slavophile". These men favoured, on nationalist grounds, communal rather than individual landed proprietorship, and hoped for the summoning by the Tzar of the Russian States-General (*Zemsky Sobor*). My father was, on the contrary, a friend of Western culture and institutions, so between him and Samarin arose more than once discussions which are registered in the minutes of those days. In 1864, when the triennial elections of the Samara nobility came around, my father was elected Marshal of the District. And when, the same year, County Councils (*Zemstvos*) were opened in Russia, my father became *ex-officio* president of the first assembly of the *Zemstvo* in Russia, since the reform began with Samara. He was at once elected president of the *Zemstvo* District Board, there being no objection at that time to such pluralism in office. Here he found what to do, and set to work doing it, or helping to do it, with all his heart and soul.

Education, roads, public health, improvement of agriculture, and many other branches of local public interest, were entrusted to the care of the *Zemstvo*, which was in the beginning left free by the Central Government to do its best. My father insisted particularly on education, and founded in Bogdanovka one of the first *Zemstvo* Communal Primary Schools in Russia, in one of the log-huts belonging to the Manor. When I came of age I was appointed by the *Zemstvo* School Board curator of that school, and helped the *Zemstvo* and the peasants to construct for it its own two-storied building. For forty years I supervised, as best I could, the working of this school.

Like all Russian primary schools it was co-educational, and I had the pleasure of seeing several generations of pupils graduate there and enter life sufficiently endowed with an acquaintance with the "three R's" and the elements of religious and general knowledge. A clever girl, Nadia, daughter of a former serf, who after graduating there

became my wife's maid, was able to write letters to her mistress and to her own children, who also studied in the Bogdanovka school. When the Samara *Zemstvo* celebrated fifty years of its existence, my father's work was remembered, and the Bogdanovka school was given his name. A deputation from the Samara *Zemstvo* attended his funeral in Bogdanovka in 1884 and placed a memorial wreath on his tomb. I was at that time campaigning in Central Asia.

While Marshal of the Samara nobility my father published a *List of the Nobility Who Possess Land in the Province of Samara*. I believe this was the first statistical publication of its kind. When I consulted it forty years later, on the eve of the revolutionary agrarian upheaval and constitutional reform of 1905, I was appalled at seeing how terribly this long list had shortened, how completely the nobility had lost possession of the land since the emancipation, through selling their land to peasants and merchants, and how utterly they had been ruined and deprived of political power by that "snapping of the heavy chain of serfdom", which is Nekrassoff's way of defining the emancipation.

My father's useful work in Samara was noticed in St. Petersburg. In 1867 he was appointed Vice-Governor of the Province of Simbirsk, in 1869 Governor in Viatka, a large and difficult province in the north-east of Russia with no local nobility, and in 1875 Governor of Minsk on the Polish frontier. In all these posts he did excellent work, which was duly recognized by ever higher civil rank and decorations, till in 1879 his health obliged him to resign. He died four years later in Moscow from chronic intestinal trouble, due, probably, to that typhus fever which he had had in the Crimea. That a Constitution should be granted Russia by the Tzar, on the model of the British Constitution, was my father's conviction. When I was abroad as a child, he wrote to me that the *Zemstvos* were "little Russian

parliaments". He hoped and expected, as did most of the enlightened Russians of his day, that the Tzar Liberator would "crown" his reform by a Constitution, and I shall tell in another chapter how near Alexander II came to satisfying this general expectation.

In the meantime the law of 1861 was being applied in a spirit of liberal self-sacrifice on the part of the nobility. Its best men volunteered for the difficult duties of "Peace intermediaries", whose duty it was to draw up for every estate an Act of Agreement between the landlord and his ex-serfs, concerning all the practical data of the liberation and of the local land-settlement of that estate. Such acts were to be controlled and confirmed by the Provincial Committees I have already mentioned. The earliest of these "Peace intermediaries" are remembered in our history as a group of good men working devotedly for their country without any red tape or officialism. What kind of people they were can be judged from the photograph I have of one of them, my cousin Merkousheff, taken in August 1861. He is shown wearing his chain of office, and holds in his hand the voluminous text of the law he was called upon to apply.

All domestic serfs became free after two years and had thenceforth to shift for themselves. Some of this class remained in Bogdanovka, where I set apart for them at a nominal rent a piece of land upon which to build their huts. Others who had learned some handicraft went to live in Moscow or some other town. The peasants who lived on this rented land were not members of the Bogdanovka village community, but of the Bogdanovka canton, i.e. of the assembly representing that group of villages to which Bogdanovka belonged. I remember one of these peasants called Unoussoff, to whom I leased a plot of this land for thirty years, and who built on it a good two-storied house and opened a general store there. He believed in book-

learning, and when his two children fell ill began treating them according to a book of practical medicine he possessed, as there was no medical help on the spot. The children died, and by the time our *Zemstvo* had with my assistance opened a hospital on my land and near the village he had two more children who grew up and prospered. Unoussoff became an active member of the cantonal self-governing body, and when a mayor elected for three years proved unsatisfactory, the cantonal assembly ordered an inquiry into his accounts. I learned from Unoussoff how this inquiry was conducted by himself and the other members of a special commission. The inquiry was pitiless. It was even proved, among other malversations, that the mayor had subscribed with the cantonal money to a fashion paper for his wife. The mayor was dismissed and another elected in his place, and I was deeply impressed with the thoroughness and pitilessness of this inquiry. I said to myself, If ever the peasants gain control over the finances of the Russian State, there will be an end to the bureaucratic irregularities from which Russia is suffering. The fact that no open and honest accountancy of the public funds is now being practised by the Bolsheviks goes far to prove to me that this is an alien Communist Government, in which the real Russian peasant has no say.

Our agricultural serfs were persuaded by my father to buy the full amount of land the law allowed them, which in the Province of Samara amounted to ten acres for each male member of the family or "soul"—women not being counted. Since the soil was alluvial, very black and rich, producing the best quality of wheat, this allocation was sufficient quantitatively and qualitatively for many years. Besides their own land our former Bogdanovka peasants rented from me much also of that land which as serfs they had formerly tilled for us. I usually made contracts with them for six years, at prices which were less than those in

the neighbourhood. As a rule the produce of the peasants' communal land was sufficient to pay their taxes and feed them and their families from year to year, this produce being freely sold by the peasants in Samara or on the spot. The grain grown on the land they farmed formed their net profits, which gradually accumulated and made them grow richer, and the extra wheat produced in this way served to feed the population of the Russian towns and to increase the Russian exports, and thus helped to secure a favourable trade balance.

In this way I saw our peasants build themselves better houses, light them with kerosene lamps instead of rush-lights, hang curtains at their windows, and put flower-pots on their sills. I saw also the primitive wooden ploughs being gradually replaced by modern steel ones, which were being vigorously introduced by the Samara *Zemstvo*. Near many of the houses one could see American reaping-machines, principally of the McCormick type, and just before the Great War there appeared in our neighbourhood threshing-machines owned, worked, and farmed out by associations of peasants.

The peasants on another of our estates—which is situated in the distant Bouzoulouk district and which belonged not to the Bogdanoff but to the Poutiloff family—preferred being freed without any land at all, except their houses and the plots on which these stood. Consequently they had nothing to reimburse to the Government, but saw themselves obliged to farm my land which adjoined their houses, or else the land of a neighbouring monastery. When I went there on coming of age—and I confess it was the only time I visited this estate—the peasants were less happy and prosperous than those who had bought land, since the rentals were continually rising, although my prices here also were lower than those of the neighbouring landowners. Speaking to me of this unsatisfactory situation, the peasants

said: "If things become too bad, the Tzar will grant us property on the lands of the Khans", meaning that they might then emigrate to some of those border-states of Central Asia where land was still plentiful. This meant also that they still had faith in the Tzar, in his power, and in his wish to help his peasants. Alas! thirty years later, in 1905, this faith in the Tzar had been lost. The agrarian rising of that year was the consequence of this mental change, as was also the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917.

***P A R T   I I***

***FIRST STEPS IN LIFE***



## CHAPTER V

### EDUCATION AT HOME IN RUSSIA AND IN SCOTLAND

With my mother's death when I was six my childhood ended, and then began for me a solitary, self-centred inner life of thought and feeling, which continued far into my youth. It was relieved only in part by the almost motherly affection of my elder sister, who was a year and a half my senior, and by the intelligent care of my German tutor, of whom I shall speak presently, and who fully answered my father's solicitude in the matter of the education of his children.

Although my father was the best pupil of his year at the Pavlovsky Cadet Corps in St. Petersburg and had his name inscribed in gold letters on the marble tablet of the corps in 1836, he was deeply dissatisfied with the "cheap" education he had received. He decided to secure for his children the very best instruction and "religious-moral" education that could then be had. His life had, by that time, become definitely bound up with work in the Russian provinces, where even a Governor's children could not find appropriate schools or teachers. So he resolved to send all of us to school in Western Europe. This was not easy to do in those days. Russian children were not allowed to study abroad, and my father could obtain a foreign passport for me only because my state of health really required particular medical treatment. Our Bogdanovka inheritance provided us with sufficient means, and my father prepared us for Western schooling by having first a Swiss nurse and then English governesses for my four sisters and me. When I was eight, he had the good fortune to obtain for me an exceptionally gifted German tutor, Herr Robert Matthes from Potsdam.

When I was a boy, German tutors had superseded in Russia the French ones of my grandfather's time. This new type of teacher has been artistically described by Tolstoy

in the person of Carl Ivanovitch in his charming story, *Childhood and Youth*. Herr Matthes was, however, a good grade higher. He was well educated, sent interesting illustrated correspondence to the first-rate Leipsic magazine *Gartenlaube*, and composed a long epic poem called *Oberon*, which he read to me, but which, I think, remained unpublished. He taught me German, in which I learned to write, I believe, rather good compositions, elementary Latin, arithmetic, and geography—also gymnastics, drawing, riding, carpentry, and bookbinding. Besides, in Bogdanovka and at the “Sulphur Springs” in summer, I learned from my tutor how to catch and collect butterflies and to snare *sousliki*—rather big rodents injurious to crops. He remained with me about three years. I was very fond of him, and he accompanied me to Edinburgh. On his return to Samara he married there the widow of a well-to-do bookseller and came to see my sisters and me in Bogdanovka when we were grown up.

After the emancipation of the serfs Russian fathers spent rather recklessly most of the money they got from the Government in the form of redemption bonds. A good part of this money was, however, spent on educating their children abroad, principally in Dresden. But my father, before leaving Russia with me, was informed by friends that a certain young Russian named Paul Hroustcheff had just finished his studies at the Royal High School in Edinburgh, having lived in the family of Professor T. C. Archer, Director of the Edinburgh Museum of Science and Art, and that this had proved most satisfactory. So my father took me to Edinburgh, and I am deeply grateful for this piece of good fortune. In Professor Archer's family I spent four happy years, being treated as a son. I must add that in no country are boys of ten to sixteen years more favoured than in England and Scotland. Without spoiling the boys, everybody tries to do something pleasant for them. Within definite

bounds they are quite free, and thus get used to self-control and responsibility.

The Edinburgh High School is more than a thousand years old. Among its former pupils are many notable men, such as Sir Walter Scott and Lord Brougham. After six years of study there one was ready to go up to a University. There was a commercial section, but the basis of the instruction was "classical". From the very first year one and the same "classical master" led his pupils quite through to the end, teaching them personally their Greek, Latin, Classical Geography, Mythology, and Antiquities. Ours was one of the best, Mr. John Carmichael, M.A., who had the gift of making us all like classical learning. I became especially devoted to it. I still have on my bookshelves the *Horace* edited by him, and the *Virgil* which we read with him in class. I was astonished when I came back to Russia to see how "classicism" had been reduced there to such a dry-as-dust grammatical course that the first thing our pupils used to do on graduating was to burn all their classical textbooks.

The British classical system was already beginning, however, to change through the introduction of Natural Science. We had a course of Zoology in our first year, and I even got a prize for my "Notes on Zoology", illustrated, which I drew up at the end of the course. This change was due to the growing influence of scientists like Huxley and Tyndall. Professor Archer was their devoted follower, and he opened to me the attractive domain of Natural Science. He bought for me, with my father's permission, a first-rate microscope, and taught me to use it and to prepare slides for it. He sent me and his own children to the popular lectures on Biology, Physics, and Chemistry, which were often delivered in the Museum Auditorium. He made me a present of an ingenious iron apparatus that demonstrated the power of inertia of a revolving wheel-gyroscope—a physical fact which is only

now being applied to naval and aerial navigation. Side by side with these scientific developments, Arithmetic and Algebra were taught at the High School, and, I believe, in other similar British institutions, only practically without making the pupil explain why he performed such and such mathematical operations. In Russia, on the contrary, even small children are expected to understand and explain these operations, and thus gain the advantage of an earlier intellectual development.

Great attention was paid to English Composition. Our teacher, Mr. Ross, really succeeded in making us write in the style of Macaulay's *Essays*. I remember when I received a prize in English Composition, Lord Provost Chambers, when handing me the prize, complimented me on winning it in spite of my being a foreigner. I had at that time no academic or any other ambition, and did not work hard except for my Latin tutor. Nevertheless in the four years I took fourteen prizes, and Professor Archer wrote to my father that I did not need any particular encouragement because as it was I studied sufficiently well. In sport I indulged only moderately, but was secretary of the second eleven and the second fifteen of the High School, and could run a mile in five minutes. I learned to swim, and we had excellent bathing on the northern shore of the Firth of Forth, where we spent every summer in a little village called Aberdour. This cured me finally of my childish scrofulous ailment. I was also fond of riding and learned to pull an oar. My great High School chum was Ramsay Smith, and our friendship endures to this day, as also that with "Bob" Miller and with two or three other old schoolfellows. When my eldest son was ten, I sent him to school in Edinburgh as my father had sent me.

When I reached the age of thirteen, my father wished to transfer me to Eton. I was admitted, and went there in the summer of 1868, but found out only then that, since we

Edinburgh High School boys had not learned to write Latin verse, I should have had to enter a form which would have been too low for my age. So, after having admired this ancient seat of learning and of play, I returned for one year more to the High School.

I shall never forget the kindness to me of Mrs. Archer, of her eldest daughter, Mrs. Lees, then already a widow, and of her younger sisters. Mrs. Archer taught me the secret of order: "A place for everything and everything in its place." She also taught me chess and backgammon, and took her children and me every Sunday to the English Episcopal Church. She was devoted to her husband. Once when the professor, who was a medical man, took me for a walk with him in Aberdour and we gathered a basketful of mushrooms, which I recognized as Russian *champignons*, the cook refused to boil them, believing all Scottish mushrooms to be poisonous. In fact, this was the general belief in Scotland, and mushrooms were only eaten when brought in tins from France. So Mrs. Archer cooked them herself and ate them with the Professor and me. Later, she confessed that if they really had proved poisonous she had wished to die with her husband. In 1867 a mammoth was discovered in Siberia, embedded in a block of ice, and Professor Archer's Russian scientific friends, when the carcass was brought to St. Petersburg, sent him a piece of the mammoth's flesh. He had it cooked and gave me a taste of this antediluvian beef-steak. I remember it was very black and tough. But though this was not considered poisonous, Mrs. Archer must have had her doubts, for she insisted on partaking of it!

Two years after leaving me in Edinburgh my father came to see me, bringing my stepmother with him, and he was fully satisfied with what he found. I was, however, beginning to forget the Russian language, in spite of the fact that my father had sent a young Russian, M. Izerguin, to Edinburgh to give me lessons in Russian, and had left me several

interesting Russian books. This young man soon fell ill and went back to Russia. So my father next sent to Edinburgh Mlle Tatiana S. Mouravieff, sister of my sister's governess. I am sorry to say that this did not help me much, for on coming back to Russia I spoke my native tongue like a foreigner, and had to work hard to learn again to speak and write good Russian.

In August 1869 I left Scotland for Russia, going direct by boat from Leith to Cronstadt. I was sincerely sorry to leave the school life and family life I had so much enjoyed. Ever since, whenever I have happened to come to Great Britain, I have gone to see my old friends in Scotland. Alas! Mrs. Archer, the professor, both sons, and three of the daughters are no more. And now, after sixty years and a revolution, I have not much hope of seeing again those dear friends who still survive.

## CHAPTER VI

## GRADUATING IN ST. PETERSBURG

Fancy a British schoolboy who had felt himself a general favourite, and been free within reasonable bounds to live and act as he liked, suddenly cooped up in a St. Petersburg boarding-school, where boys were constantly under surveillance, were not allowed to go out alone, but had to walk in the streets with a tutor and in pairs, were not allowed to buy what they wanted, and had no playground and no sports! That was what happened to me on my return to Russia from Scotland at the age of fourteen. It may be pictured as the boyish counterpart of the feelings of a grown man who had been used to singing openly and boldly,

Rule, Britannia! Britannia rules the waves!  
Britons never, never will be slaves . . .

and who suddenly found himself in a bureaucracy-ruled and police-ridden country, where no political rights were allowed, where serfdom had ruled till only a few years previously, and where all academic youth was deservedly under suspicion.

The Monkevitz boarding-school where my father entered me at first in August 1869 was the best in the capital. There I lived and studied a year and a half, until I was ready to enter the Imperial Alexander Lyceum. I was very backward in Russian and in Latin (as taught in Russia). In mathematics I knew how to solve problems in arithmetic and algebra, but not how to reason them out. "Encouragements to study", which Professor Archer had judged superfluous, were profusely applied in the Monkevitz boarding-school, and ambition was awakened in me. A pupil who had attained the highest mark (5) for all his recitations and written answers during the week received on Saturday a

ticket printed in golden letters, and his name was inscribed on a gilt-framed board that hung in the school reception-room. I succeeded in obtaining this honour pretty often, applying myself particularly to Russian and French composition, and, most unwillingly, to elementary Latin grammar.

The summer of 1870—that of the Franco-Prussian War—I spent at school in the picturesque northern outskirts of St. Petersburg, near the Finnish frontier. Although the Imperial Russian Government helped Prussia all it could, Russian public opinion was decidedly pro-French and anti-German. I was invited for the Christmas holidays of 1870—1 to Helsingfors, the Finnish capital, by my father's old friend since Crimean days, Count Nicholas V. Adlerberg, who was then Governor-General of Finland. I was most impressed by the state and ceremony of his functions, and spent a most agreeable fortnight at the Palace, skating on the frozen sea, dancing at the homes of the social aristocracy (which was Swedish), and attending the Opera, where Finnish talent from among the lower peasant class was just beginning to work its way through and up.

In May 1871 I entered the third class of the Lyceum after a rather successful examination, having therefore only a year and a half more to study before entering the University. This Lyceum was founded by Alexander I in 1811, during the liberal period of his reign, and was intended to furnish Russia with liberally educated statesmen from among Russian youths of good family, culture, and talent. The school answered fully these high expectations, since the very first graduation, that of 1817, included Prince Gortchakoff, the future Imperial Chancellor, and Pushkin, our greatest modern poet. Since then, in almost every Cabinet one or two former Lyceum pupils have found scope for their talents, except towards the end of Nicholas II's reign, after the best men of Russia had lost faith in his régime or were prevented by his enemies from serving him.

In my class also were found a future Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexander Isvolsky, and his future Assistant Minister, myself. Count Vladimir N. Kokovtzeff, for many years Minister of Finance and successor of Stolypin as Premier, and Sergius Sazonoff, Isvolsky's successor at the Foreign Office, were also among the distinguished pupils of the Lyceum. It was from its foundation a privileged school, which gave its graduates at once ninth rank in the Civil Service, whereas the Universities could only grant the tenth rank. These grades were ordained by Peter the Great in the "Table of Ranks", and ran from first Chancellor down to the fourteenth.

Work in the Lyceum I found interesting and not difficult, and I set to it with a will. The school programme was meant for men entering public life, and treated principally of History and of International and other branches of Law. Languages such as Latin, English, French, and German were obligatory. No branch of Natural Science was taught there except Physics. Chemistry had been suppressed just before I entered, but I took up Chemistry later on my own account, studying it by the textbook of Mendeléieff. I nearly blew up the house of Mr. Charles Heath, where I boarded, and injured for life the index-finger of my right hand, by an explosion of chemicals I did not know enough to prevent. I was attracted at this time by the scientific study of Agriculture, which, being a landowner, I thought it my duty to learn.

I passed into the University course first of my class, with full marks, and received as a prize the works of Turgénieff. To obtain full marks at my Latin examination I wrote an essay in Latin on "The Life of Julius Caesar", as I had not been very proficient in learning by rote the rules of Latin grammar. When graduating, however, I read and translated Tacitus at sight. This familiarity with Latin stood me in good stead later when I became Minister-Resident in Rome. I

maintained the same full marks also in all the other examinations, but fell down on "good conduct" because of a violent demonstration or revolt of my class against the demands of our new German professor, Pastor Hertzenberg. He insisted on our handing in written German compositions, while his lenient predecessor had never required them. Some members of the class, including Isvolsky and myself, knew German well, but others of the class did not, and among these was Paul Reinbot, in spite of his German name. We barricaded the doors of our class-room and began to make an awful noise by throwing our desks and tables about, just over the apartment of our poor good Director, Lieutenant-General Miller. When this worthy old man tried to open the door of our class-room, found it barricaded and could not get in, he nearly had a fit, while the shindy we raised made the plaster fall from his ceilings and a kerosene lamp tumble off his wall and break. This happened just at the beginning of the Easter holidays, when many pupils had already left for home. We invited them to come back to a class meeting and decide what was to be done further. The majority came, and I was elected President of what we childishly called the National Assembly, conducting the discussion in strict parliamentary form. A vote to continue resistance was carried, and we certainly would all have been expelled had not Mr. Charles Heath intervened and saved the situation. Each of us had to go down to the Director's study and sign in his presence a declaration of obedience to all the orders of the Lyceum authorities. But we had been told confidentially by Mr. Heath that our class would not be obliged to write the objectionable German compositions. Only Reinbot was rusticated, i.e. suspended for a year. But all those who took part in this row lost three marks in conduct, so that by the end of that year, instead of having a full twelve for three years, I had only 11·72, while to receive a gold medal one had to get at least an average of 11·75.

To make up for this deficiency I wrote a thesis on the "History of the Relations of Russia and the Western European Powers with Turkey", for which I consulted the original diplomatic documents of the Moscow Principal Archives at the Foreign Office. My MS. was practically a sketch of the history of the Eastern Question, in which I had begun to take a lively interest because of our approaching War of Liberation in Bulgaria. While reading the diplomatic correspondence concerning the Russo-Turkish Treaty of Baghchiseraï of 1681, I happened to discover an error in the great History of Russia by Solovieff. He had evidently failed to read these last pages of these very documents and, consequently, did not know how those negotiations actually ended. Our professor of history, M. Bauer, gave my essay his hearty approval, and the three points lacking to my average were added to it and I was granted a gold medal, But as my friend Alexander Isvolsky had abstained from attending the ill-fated class meeting, he retained his full marks for conduct, and therefore received the first gold medal, while I had to content myself with the second. I must say that this was perfectly right, because Isvolsky was a more gifted man than I, and was certainly first of our class while we were taking the University course. His thesis was on the Brussels Conference of 1874 prohibiting the use of explosive bullets.

On graduation, December 20, 1875, both Isvolsky and I immediately entered the Foreign Office and began preparing for the diplomatic examination, he as Attaché to the newspaper section of the Chancery and I as Attaché to the Moscow Archives. Every summer while at school we had two and a half months' vacation, part of which I spent, two successive years, at the Staraya Roussa watering-place, to counteract the evil effects on my health of schoolboy cloistration and of the insufficient food given the pupils of the Lyceum. I also went once to Bogdanovka, where for so many years

none of us had lived. My father had had a sanatorium opened there for the treatment of tuberculosis and digestive ailments with *koumis* (mare's milk). Once I went to see my father in Viatka, and was taken by him on a most interesting tour of inspection through the wildest districts of that distant and little-known province, making more than a thousand miles in his carriage over most primitive roads. I believe that one way or another I have visited in the course of my life almost every part of the Russian Empire, except the extreme North and the Far East.

The summer after that visit, as an utter contrast to it, I decided to travel with a fellow-student to Western Europe. After stopping two or three days on the estate of another of our class-mates on the Polish frontier, where serfdom had left far deeper traces on the peasants than in Great Russia, we went on to Paris. Here we were met and piloted about by the excellent French teacher at the Lyceum, M. Girardet. He had helped me to master, though very tardily, the French language. To exercise myself in it I wrote my diary of this journey in French. I made the acquaintance of M. Girardet's brother, a captain in the French infantry, the first French officer I had ever known. He was then smarting, though not hopeless, under the recent defeat by the Prussians.

After seeing the principal sights and theatres of Paris I went to Dieppe for some sea-bathing, and from there on a flying visit to my good friends in Edinburgh, whom I found all doing well. Thence I went first to Biarritz and next to Switzerland, driving in a stage-coach from Geneva to Chamonix and visiting the charming shores of Lake Leman. I also went to see my three younger sisters at the Katherinen-stift Institute in Stuttgart, where the Queen of Württemberg, Olga, daughter of Emperor Nicholas I, was particularly kind to the numerous Russian pupils. Among these were the two young Countesses Soumarokoff-Elston, sisters of the future Prince Yousoupoff.

What attracted me most during this tour were the parliaments of the lands I visited. In Berlin I entered with a feeling of respectful awe the great new over-decorated building of the Reichstag, where freely elected representatives of the people could boldly state their political opinions and defend their ideas by voting for or against the gravest measures proposed by the Government. In Berlin I also bought and read for the first time a good many Russian books printed abroad, beyond the reach of any censor—books which threw a new and independent light on our internal problems. I acquired also some German works about Socialism, which was then a new and not yet popular teaching. I must confess I had then no time to study this question.

In Paris I attended a sitting of the National Assembly in the Theatre of Versailles, presided over by Grévy, and saw the stout, black-bearded “opportunist” Gambetta, with his glass eye, as also Paul de Cassagnac, the lean Bonapartist duellist, and other opponents of the young Republic, which was soon to be voted as being, in the words of Thiers, “that form of government which divides us least”. I looked at the charred ruins of the Tuileries, burnt in 1871 by the Communists, and read the flaming words, “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity” on the monuments around which civil war had so recently raged under the eyes of the German besiegers. At last, in London I was admitted to look at the narrow, uncomfortable, straight-backed benches of “the Mother of Parliaments”, and felt that here liberty was neither a remote hope, as in Germany, nor a vain boast, as in France, but a solid reality worth giving one’s life for. On my way back to St. Petersburg I met my father in Warsaw, and then returned to my last year of academic work.

About that time I began—and have continued ever since—to feel a deep interest in questions of philosophy. At home I had been brought up in the simple, unquestioning Greek-

Orthodox faith of my fathers. In Scotland this had not been shaken, either by the little book *Christian Evidences* which we had to learn at school, or by my initiation into Natural Science, which was then giving birth in Britain to the fashionable doctrine of Agnosticism. Among the books in Professor Archer's library, of which he made me free, I found an English translation of the *Historical and Critical Dictionary* of Bayle, the French eighteenth-century Encyclopaedist. I was astonished at some of the unwonted philosophical data mentioned in it, but was not greatly impressed by them. However, the Protestant environment in which I lived certainly affected my thinking, and I came back to Russia, I believe, a good Christian, but more of the Protestant than of the Greek-Orthodox type.

In the Lyceum we studied an elementary course of Theology and Canon Law, as well as Psychology and Logic. At the same time in my miscellaneous reading I began to get an inkling of various philosophical doctrines. I believed that the great philosophers, whom I came to know by name, had discovered truth, and that I had only to read some of their books to learn it. But after having read a fairly good and impartial History of Philosophy, I was astonished at having found therein only a number of guesses and theories, all differing from one another, and often mutually contradictory. All of them could not be true, and I saw no means of discovering which of them was true. I felt overwhelmed and submerged by the numberless "words, words, words" of philosophical terminology, the real sense of which it is so difficult to discern and which admit of such various interpretations.

Somewhat later I imagined that there might be two direct methods of getting at truth. One of these would be, I thought, to discard first everything one knows and then proceed to build up *truth* from some datum of which one was sure—I did not then know that Descartes had tried to do this

centuries earlier; while the other method would be to start with admitting all one knows, and then gradually abandoning all of it that might prove untrue. I felt, however, that both methods would lead me beyond my depth and did not venture to follow them, but thought out what I called the *Theory of Relative Truth*. My idea was, and is, that every individual can grasp only a certain amount or aspect of truth, which, relatively to him, would be the truth.

I was thus battling alone with all these problems, letting no one into the secret of my solitary searchings, when something happened which upset all my ratiocinations. I had been reading all I could lay my hands on concerning philosophy, and one day I chanced on an article about the "Historical Ideas of Auguste Comte" in the foremost liberal Russian monthly of those days, the *Fatherland Memoirs*. In this article a popular young Russian author, Pissareff, who a few years later was accidentally drowned, gave a vigorous and, as I now know, wholly distorted account of Comte's system of *Positivism*, and spoke of "the religion of bushmen and horses" in not even an agnostic tone but a frankly atheistic manner. The result of reading this was that from that day forth for a long time I ceased to say my prayers, because my immature reason believed this man's teaching to be the truth. Thinking I had found it, I ceased to search for it, and turned to the more practical problem of choosing a career to follow after I had graduated.

I had read of people who at the end of their lives regretted the way they had lived. I wanted to do better and to find beforehand a rational basis for my life and work. I shared Goethe's opinion expressed in *Faust*, and that of Turgénieff in his *Advice to Russian Youths*, that "the aim of life is productive work", and did not regard a life as worth living that was lived only for the accumulation of pleasurable sensations. Our University courses had made me acquainted

with Political Science and with Diplomatic History, which I found very attractive. So, without waiting for a rational solution of the question as to what I was to do, I decided to work in the field of Diplomacy; and being obliged to choose some particular branch of our Civil Service, I asked to be entered on the list of candidates for our Foreign Office.

Had there been in Russia a Constitutional Government, I should certainly have tried to enter Parliament. But, in spite of my father's hopes and expectations, the Russian Constitution was still hanging fire, and I thought that if by the time it was granted I had become a Minister Plenipotentiary, I should probably be able to find a seat. My dream was some day to stand before a Russian Parliament as Head of the Russian Foreign Office. Nothing then seemed more improbable, yet thirty-three years later these imaginings were approximately realized. For in October 1908 I submitted to the *Duma* and to the Council of State the Budget of the Foreign Office for 1909, signed by me as Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, and was present in the same capacity at the opening of that session of our Parliament.

The story of the Russian Constitution is so closely interwoven with that of Russian revolution, and with the successes and mishaps of Russian foreign policy, that I shall have to speak of all three together when telling what I saw of the last years of the Tzar Liberator's reign and of the policy of his two successors.

## CHAPTER VII

### MOSCOW ON THE EVE OF WAR. THE TRUE STORY OF TOLSTOY'S "ANNA KARENINA"

It was at a time of seething turmoil—in the Crimean War—of national defeat, and of reform that I was born. And I entered upon my career as a man in the midst of another great political liberal agitation, which preceded and followed the Russo-Turkish War of Liberation of 1877-8.

The Moscow to which I came, as Attaché to the Foreign Office Archives and in preparation for my diplomatic examinations, was quite unlike the sedate, conservative, serf-owning First Capital which I had left in 1863. The city was boiling over with enthusiasm in the cause of our Slavonic brethren, who had revolted against the Sultan a year before (under the encouragement of Austria-Hungary) in the Serbian Provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They had been joined by the Principalities of Serbia and Montenegro, which had declared war on Turkey in the summer of 1876. The Moscow streets and public gatherings were overrun by girls and youths decorated with Slavonic badges of blue, white, and red, collecting money to help the insurgents and assist in sending thousands of Russian volunteers to Belgrade, where the Russian hero of Central Asia, Tcherniaeff, then a retired General, was in command of the Serbian Army.

The centre of this agitation was the Moscow Slavonic Committee, whose usual work consisted in helping Slavonic students to pursue their studies in Russia. Its President was the talented and fiery tribune Ivan S. Aksakoff. It had now become the meeting-place of fervid Russian and Slavonic patriots, who discussed with unprecedented freedom the weightiest questions of Russian foreign and internal politics and urged the Imperial Government to make war on Turkey. The Balkan Slavs were to be liberated from the

Ottoman yoke. But it was also implied that Russia herself should shake off the yoke of an effete bureaucracy, which had become a barrier between the Tzar and his people. The aim was to bring about the convocation of the National States-General (*Zemsky Sobor*) of old Muscovite days. These ideas were also attractively expounded in Aksakoff's weekly paper *Russ*. Parallel with this Slavonic agitation at Moscow, the Westernized liberals of St. Petersburg, represented in the Press by Kraevsky, editor of the big daily *Golos*, were working in favour of a Western European Constitution for Russia, continuing the efforts in this direction made officially by the *Zemstvos* of Moscow and St. Petersburg in 1865.

Nothing of the kind had ever been seen in autocratic Russia, not even in the days of Catherine II's Commission of Reform. The Central Government, with General Timasheff as Minister of the Interior, seemed non-existent, while Emperor Alexander II and his Chancellor, Prince Gortchakoff, had both gone abroad for the summer. At the same time the Heir to the Throne—the future Alexander III—and his wife were favouring the Slavophile movement and helping to send volunteers to Serbia. Even the Empress was influenced in its favour by her Lady-in-Waiting, Mlle Tioutcheff (daughter of our charming poet), who was married to Aksakoff—a circumstance which did not injure the latter at all in the eyes of the Minister of the Interior.

I remember that my chief, Baron Theodore A. Buhler, Director of the Archives, who knew everybody in Moscow worth knowing, kindly introduced me at this period to Ivan Serguievitch Aksakoff. He took me with him one morning to the Moscow Bank of Mutual Credit, where Aksakoff, a poor man, had been made a Director by the great merchants of the city who sympathized with him. There I saw a tall bulky man of the true Russian type, with a full fair beard and of attractive and fluent speech. He was waited upon by men coming in and going out of

his office, who looked more like eager disciples and would-be volunteers than banking clients. I also heard him speak in the Slavonic Committee, which, however, I did not join, because it was often openly in political disagreement with our Foreign Office. So was the St. Petersburg Slavonic Committee, into which my father had introduced me as a guest, its President, Ivan Petrovitch Korniloff, and one of its most active members, Alexander D. Bashmakoff, being my father's old schoolfellows and friends. Aksakoff's Slavophile and liberal ideas appealed to me greatly, all the more because his family also came from our Province of Samara.

While this political agitation was progressing and spreading in Russia, coinciding with Gladstone's famous "Bulgarian Atrocities" campaign in Great Britain, the conviction grew among the *intelligentsia* of Russia that, if the war they were doing their best to bring on took place, it would be followed in Russia by either a Constitution or a revolution. We shall see how near the Tzar Liberator came to granting a Constitution in 1881, and how this liberal and salutary intention was balked by his assassination. We shall see also how, before returning to the Crimea for the autumn, he had secured the neutrality of Austria-Hungary in case Russia should declare war on the Sultan. On his way back from the Crimea to St. Petersburg he stopped for three days in Moscow, and at a great reception in the Kremlin announced to his subjects that he had stopped the Turkish advance into Serbia and secured an armistice. For the first time in my life as an employee of the Foreign Office I was present at this official function and heard the Emperor's speech. In spite of what the Emperor seemed to expect, this speech aroused no enthusiasm. Thus Alexander II, with his weak government and unsatisfactory finances, was left alone to face the stern reality of a war which was at that time as unwelcome to him as it was inevitable. On being transferred soon after to Prince Gortchakoff's Chancery in St. Petersburg I

was to witness the further development of this momentous crisis.

Among the volunteers who left Moscow for Serbia in the summer of 1876, Count Leo Tolstoy has placed Vronsky, the hero of his wonderful novel *Anna Karenina*. As this happened more than fifty years ago, I think I may now be permitted to divulge the true story on which this novel is founded. I knew personally both "Vronsky" and "Karenin", and it was by mere chance that I did not meet "Anna". The "Oblonskys" and the "Shtcherbatskys" described by Tolstoy I found still living in Moscow, where the author and his family were also living, in a distant quarter of the city, whither only specially attracted or privileged people went. The skating-rink in the Zoological Gardens, on which "Kitty" and "Levin" met, was still the same, though less fashionable.

As told in Tolstoy's novel, a brilliant officer of a cavalry regiment of the Guards meets in Moscow Anna Karenina, the clever, attractive, and very womanly wife of an aged St. Petersburg bureaucrat, and falls in love with her. The passion is mutual. After a thrilling accident at the Tzarskoe Selo races and an attempt at suicide on the part of Vronsky, he and Anna leave together for abroad. They cannot marry because Karenin refuses from religious scruples to consent to a divorce. He takes charge of his and Anna's little son, while a daughter is born to Vronsky and Anna. Ultimately Vronsky, having retired from his regiment, tires of doing nothing and, perhaps, in some measure, of Anna. She believes him to be contemplating marriage with a girl he goes to see in the neighbourhood of Moscow. She goes to the railway station from which Vronsky usually starts and throws herself under a passing train.

The inner story of "Vronsky's" and "Anna's" lives is perfectly true, but its outward circumstances are so camouflaged as to make the *dramatis personae* unrecognizable. I happen

to know that the romance occurred, not in the military and bureaucratic society of St. Petersburg, but abroad, between two Russian diplomats. I do not consider myself free even now to give the real names of the actors in the drama, though both "Vronsky" and "Karenin" are long since dead. But "Anna" may be still alive, and the daughter of "Vronsky" and "Anna" is very probably now living. I made the acquaintance of "Vronsky" in 1881 during one of his visits to St. Petersburg on leave. He was advancing successfully in his career. He was a tall, good-looking, elegant young man, with a black beard, small but full; a man well-gifted, and, socially speaking, intelligent, but rather flighty. "Anna" did not throw herself under a train, but redeemed her passion by suffering for ten years more from her painful and illegal union with "Vronsky" till at last "Karenin" was persuaded to consent to a divorce. The marriage then took place in a Russian Church abroad, when "Vronsky" was appointed head of a diplomatic mission. The last time I met him was in 1889 at lunch in the Russian Embassy in Paris. By that time Tolstoy's hero had become a stout, grey-haired old man, and very superstitious—he absolutely refused to sit down at table when thirteen were present: the wife of one of the secretaries had actually to be asked at the last moment to come to lunch, which made us all half an hour late. But "Vronsky" had by that time reached the blue ribbon of a diplomatic career.

As to "Karenin", immediately after losing "Anna" he abandoned his diplomatic functions and became one of our good provincial governors. Many of Tolstoy's readers have professed to discover a certain resemblance between "Karenin" and Pobedonostzeff, the Procurator-General of the Holy Synod and the evil, reactionary genius of Alexander III. As it was through the medium of Pobedonostzeff that Tolstoy came to be excommunicated by the Russian Church, it has been supposed that Tolstoy purposely graced his

“Karenin” with “comic ears” and an unfortunate marriage. The real “Karenin”, in fact, resembled Pobedonostzeff, whom I also knew, only to the extent of being tall and, in his youth, slender.

“Karenin” was a deeply religious man, liked by everybody, of a noble soul, and a lover of children. His son, as Tolstoy says, remained with him, and was later employed in the Civil Service in the Russian provinces. But “Anna” was never replaced in “Karenin’s” heart and life. He liked to gather around him in St. Petersburg, once a week on Tuesdays, promising young men, and he helped many of them to develop their scientific and artistic talents. He died an aged and honoured senator.

## CHAPTER VIII

### HOW RUSSIAN DIPLOMACY MADE READY FOR THE WAR OF LIBERATION

Prince Gortchakoff's Chancery, to which I was admitted as Attaché in December 1876 through the kindness of my chief, Baron Buhler, was the holy of holies of Russian diplomacy. All political correspondence concerning Europe and the United States passed through this institution, where, besides the Director and a Vice-Director, were nine Secretaries and usually two or three Attachés. We had to copy the Prince's dispatches—of course by hand, as at that time typewriting-machines had not yet been thought of—and to code and decode all political telegrams. But the drafts were made by Baron Alexander Jomini (son of that Swiss General who, under Alexander I, had founded the Russian Staff Academy), the Chancellor's amanuensis with the title of First Councillor.

Neither Emperor Alexander II, nor his Chancellor, nor any of his Ministers wished for war. But when none of the other Great Powers showed a sincere disposition to come to the help of the Christian (chiefly Greek-Orthodox) subjects of the Sultan who had risen against him, it began to appear more and more probable that Russia might be forced into hostilities with Turkey. So the duty of Russian diplomacy was to make ready for such an eventuality. As this would oblige Russia to move her troops once more, as she had done before, through Rumania and across the Danube into Bulgaria and Thrace, the first thing to do was to secure for Russia the friendly neutrality of Austria-Hungary, which we should find on the flank and in the rear of our troops during such an operation.

To come to an agreement about the mutual relations of Russia and Austria in the event of such a war, Alexander II

and his Chancellor met Francis Joseph and his Chancellor, Count Andrassy, in the small Austrian town and castle of Reichstadt, at the end of June 1876. At that time the issue of the war between Serbia and Montenegro on one side and Turkey on the other still remained uncertain, and war between Turkey and Russia might possibly be yet avoided. Consequently at this Reichstadt interview only the general basis of a Russo-Austrian agreement concerning the trouble in the Near East could be reached. Its essential points were noted down by Prince Gortchakoff in a very secret memorandum, which, with his accompanying comments, was inscribed in his *Book (Le Livre)*, in which a confidential secretary copied out all his writings. Since I was later empowered by the Imperial Foreign Office to make public this interesting document, I give its full text in the original French and in my own English translation in an appendix to this chapter. The following, however, were its most important points.

In case the Christians won the war, the two Governments would act in agreement to settle its consequences. They would not favour the establishment of a great Slavonic State; but Montenegro and Serbia might annex, the former Herzegovina and a port on the Adriatic, and the latter certain parts of Old Serbia and of Bosnia. But in such case Austria would have the right to annex Turkish Croatia, and some parts of Bosnia contiguous to its frontiers, according to a line to be agreed upon. In case the Ottoman Empire in Europe should completely fall to pieces, "Constantinople might be set up as a free city".

This agreement, concluded in Reichstadt on June 26 (o.s.), 1876, contains for the first time in a diplomatic act any mention of the eventual right of Austria-Hungary to annex certain parts of Bosnia adjoining her frontiers. Even this limited annexation, however, was to take place only if the whole of Herzegovina and a seaport on the Adriatic

came to be annexed to Montenegro and certain parts of Old Serbia and Bosnia to Serbia. On this point the Russian Chancellor made the following remark: "The Vienna Cabinet considers this compensation as a vital condition, without which it could not admit an aggrandizement of the neighbouring Slavonic Principalities."

This friendly settlement may be considered as having been fair and equitable for both parties. But when the text of the military and political conventions, which had to be negotiated on this basis in Vienna, were finally drawn up on January 3/15, 1877, they contained something quite different. The military convention, it is true, guaranteed to Russia the full advantages of Austria-Hungary's benevolent neutrality in our war with Turkey of 1877-78, but the political convention admitted the right of Austria-Hungary to annex the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina without any kind of compensation for either Montenegro or Serbia. As to Constantinople, the above-mentioned Reichstadt agreement was maintained.

Without entering into the details of this and several ensuing negotiations, it is enough to say that Bosnia and Herzegovina remained from 1877 down to the Great War the pivot of Austro-Hungarian foreign policy. Their annexation in 1908 led to the first war-scare, of which, having myself played a part in it, I shall speak later; and the immediate cause of the Great War was the assassination, in the capital of Bosnia, of the Heir to the Austro-Hungarian Throne by a local Serb who had been made an Austrian subject.

In spite of the extreme secrecy of the Reichstadt negotiations I was admitted to a knowledge of them because at that time, one afternoon in February, 1877, the Director of our Chancery, the excellent M. Miller, called me into his private study and, after making me promise absolute secrecy, bade me copy a document which was precisely a

draft of the Reichstadt political convention that was then being negotiated in Vienna. I had to copy it in such a form that it would conform, line by line, to the original, for easier reference in telegrams. When, thirty years later, being then Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs in St. Petersburg, I asked to be shown the text of the above-mentioned convention during the height of the annexation crisis of 1908, I was brought the very copy I had made in the Director's study so many years before. The paper had grown yellow, but the text, written in a rather childish round hand, was still quite clear.

Another duty of Russian diplomacy was to obtain from Rumania the right of marching our troops through her territory. This task was entrusted to Alexander I. Nelidoff, then Councillor of our Embassy in Constantinople and later Ambassador there. He travelled to Bucharest in the disguise of a Russian merchant, calling himself Alexandroff, and concluded an excellent military convention with the Rumanian Government.

Up to the last moment our diplomacy was anxious to avoid war. I wrote a memorandum, in January 1877, which was presented to the Chancellor through the Director, M. Miller, in which I spoke of an agreement with Great Britain concerning the Straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles as a means of averting war. Instead of rebuking me for a cheeky youngster, Prince Gortchakoff handed the paper to his assistant, de Giers, who was then also chief of the Asiatic Department, inasmuch as my memoir mentioned possible compensations in Central Asia. I must say that after this—if not in spite of it!—both Prince Gortchakoff and de Giers took a liking to me.

Baron Buhler obtained for me the privilege of being personally presented by him to the Chancellor. I saw a tall, grey-haired old man, somewhat stooping under the burden of his seventy-eight years, wearing a long black frock-coat

and a black-satin cravat wound in the old fashion several times round his neck. He had on black-velvet boots, which he wore because he suffered from gout. His face was close-shaved, and his eyes, behind his gold-rimmed spectacles, looked piercing and young. On my being presented he held out his hand and said to me: "We are school-fellows, you and I." He referred to the fact—to which I have already alluded—that he graduated from the Lyceum in 1817. By these words he at once won my heart.

When on another occasion I had been called to his study on some Chancery business, he showed me the magnificent apartments which adjoined his study and were reserved, as he said, for his formal dinners and receptions. He himself led me through them all. He told me then that he had just received a letter from the Sultan of Morocco—a personage who, before the days of Algeciras, was a practically unknown quantity in Europe—addressing him in wonderfully high-flown and flattering terms. This had evidently pleased the Prince's vanity, which was his weak point. It had led to a quarrel between him and Bismarck. Another weak—or perhaps strong—point was his close-fistedness, of which many anecdotes were told. His father had been an Army officer and a poor man, and Prince Alexander Gortchakoff started saving as far back as when he was Councillor to our Legation in London. He also told me once that he there began taking lessons in calligraphy, but admitted that he had not profited much by them. He wrote a minute and crabbed hand, and I have preserved some of his written orders sent down to the Chancery. He never wrote his dispatches himself, but dictated them to a secretary, generally to Baron Jomini. The latter possessed a wonderful talent for expressing other people's ideas and convictions, and he used to say, "When I write anything I believe it is true."

As soon as the Reichstadt conventions were signed and ratified, it became possible for the Russian Government to

fix the very day on which our war with Turkey was to begin. So, one morning in March, our Director called all of us into his study and said: "I am about to confide to you a State secret. But you must first promise me, on your honour, not only not to divulge it to anyone, but even not to speak of it among yourselves." Having obtained our promise, Miller told us that the war with Turkey would begin on April 24th next. There is a saying that a secret known to two persons is a secret no longer. I can vouch for the fact that the above-mentioned secret, known to more than fifteen employees of the Chancery, was so well kept, that on the morning of April 12th/24th Nelidoff, then Chargé d'Affaires in Constantinople, broke off Russia's relations with Turkey and left, together with all his subordinates, quite unexpectedly to the Turks. On the same day a detachment of Cossacks under General Straukoff was able to take by surprise an important Turkish bridge, which was to serve our troops in their advance. All the personnel of the Chancery thus proved worthy of the confidence shown them, and among them were several men with an important future.

Such, for example, were Count Vladimir N. Lamsdorff, who was then First Secretary and later became Minister for Foreign Affairs (1900-1906), Prince Valerian S. Obolensky-Neledinsky-Meletzky, then Second Secretary, who became later Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs and who was my great personal friend, Alexander P. Isvolsky, who succeeded Lamsdorff as Minister, Anatole A. Kroupensky, who occupied very successfully the post of Ambassador at Rome, and S. D. Sazonoff, who succeeded Isvolsky as Minister and under whose administration the Great War began.

I had been promoted Third Secretary at the beginning of the Turkish War, but soon, like many other young men of the Foreign Office, I volunteered for service in the field, thus bringing into my diplomatic life a fighting interlude, to which I now pass.

## APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VIII

## THE TEXT OF THE REICHSTADT CONVENTION

## (1) THE FRENCH TEXT

*Arrangements pris à Reichstadt le 26 juin 1876.*

*Très secrète.*

Il a été jugé nécessaire de ne pas proclamer le principe de non-intervention *absolue*, afin de ne pas se livrer les mains d'avance, en vue de certaines éventualités.

Nous avons insisté sur la fermeture du port de Klek sans laquelle la non-intervention ne serait pas sincère et effective. De notre côté, nous ne pourrions nous y croire liés et, en ce cas, l'Angleterre ne l'observerait pas. Le Comte Andrássy y a ajouté la fermeture de Cattaro qui a été réclamé par les Anglais, afin de donner à cette mesure la caractère de l'impartialité. Toutefois le Cabinet de Vienne prévoit l'impossibilité d'empêcher l'assistance privée de venir en aide aux chrétiens, vu les vives sympathies des populations dalmates.

*Il a été convenu:*

*1. Quand au présent:*

Les puissances observeront le principe de non-intervention dans le moment actuel, se réservant de s'entendre ultérieurement si les circonstances l'exigeaient.

Les ports de Klek et de Cattaro seront fermés aux deux parties.

En aucun cas on n'assistera les Turcs contre les chrétiens.

*2. Quand à l'avenir:*

*a)* En cas de succès des Turcs, les puissances s'entendront pour les arrêter, s'ils se livrent à des violences excessives contre les chrétiens.

Elles exigeront le rétablissement du *status quo ante* en Serbie, y compris l'abolition des forteresses turques.

govine, les puissances insisteront à Constantinople pour qu'elles soient organisées sur la base du programme tracé par la dépêche du 30 décembre et le mémoire de Berlin, ou du moins, d'après le règlement crétois.

*b)* Si les chrétiens sont victorieux:

Les puissances agiront d'accord pour régler les conséquences de la guerre.

Elles ne favoriseront pas l'établissement d'un grand état slave; mais le Monténégro et la Serbie pourront annexer,—le premier l'Herzégovine et un port sur l'Adriatique; la seconde quelques parties de la vieille Serbie et de la Bosnie.

Mais en pareil cas, l'Autriche aura la faculté de s'annexer la Croatie turque et quelques parties de la Bosnie contiguës à ses frontières, d'après un tracé à convenir.

De son coté, la Russie aurait alors la faculté de reprendre la partie de la Bessarabie cédée par le traité de 1856.

Si, enfin, les conséquences d'un succès des chrétiens devaient amener l'entier écroulement de l'Empire ottoman en Europe, la Bulgarie et la Roumélie pourraient former des principautés indépendantes dans leurs circonscriptions naturelles.

L'Épire et la Thessalie seraient libres de s'annexer à la Grèce.

Constantinople pourrait être érigé en ville libre.

Le Cabinet de Vienne considère cette compensation comme une condition vitale sans laquelle elle ne pourrait admettre un agrandissement des principautés slaves voisines.

Si le gouvernement russe le jugeait possible et utile, il lui est réservé de s'annexer le port de Batoum.

## (2) THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

*Agreement arrived at in Reichstadt on June 26, 1876.*

*Very secret.*

It was judged necessary not to proclaim the principle of absolute non-intervention, so as not to be fettered beforehand in view of certain eventualities.

We have insisted on the closing of the seaport of Klek, without which non-intervention would not be sincere or effective. We on our side could not consider ourselves bound by it, and in that case England would not observe it. Count Andrassy added to this the closing of Cattaro, which has been demanded by the English, in order to give to this measure the character of being impartial. The Vienna Cabinet, however, foresees the impossibility of preventing private help coming in aid of the Christians, having in view the lively sympathies of the inhabitants of Dalmatia.

*It has been agreed:*

*1. As to the present:*

The Powers will observe the principle of non-intervention at the present moment, reserving to themselves to come to an agreement later, if the circumstances require it.

The seaports of Klek and Cattaro will be closed to both sides.

In no case will the Turks be helped against the Christians.

*2. As to the future:*

(a) In case the Turks win, the Powers will agree to stop them if they proceed to acts of excessive violence against the Christians.

They will demand the re-establishment of the *status quo ante* in Serbia, including the abolition of Turkish fortresses.

As to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Powers will insist in Constantinople on these being organized on the basis of the programme pointed out by the dispatch of December 30 and the memorandum of Berlin, or at least according to the Cretan statute.

(b) If the Christians win:

The Governments will act in agreement to settle the consequences of the war.

They will not favour the establishment of a great Slavonic State; but Montenegro and Serbia may annex,—the former Herzegovina and a port on the Adriatic, and the latter some parts of Old Serbia and of Bosnia.

The Vienna Cabinet considers this compensation as a vital condition, without which it could not admit an aggrandizement of the neighbouring Slavonic principalities. If the Russian Government judged it possible or useful, it would be at liberty to annex the port of Batoum.

But in such event, Austria would have the right to annex Turkish Croatia and some parts of Bosnia contiguous to her frontiers, according to a line to be agreed upon.

On her part, Russia would then have the right to take back the part of Bessarabia which was ceded by the treaty of 1856.

If, lastly, the consequences of the success of the Christians should bring about the complete downfall of the Ottoman Empire in Europe, Bulgaria and Rumelia might form independent principalities in their natural boundaries. Epirus and Thessaly would be free to annex themselves to Greece. Constantinople might be set up as a free city.

***P A R T   I I I***  
***A FIGHTING INTERLUDE***



## CHAPTER IX

## BELEAGUERING PLEVNA

The military history of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8 has been written long since, as the story of the fight of two brave nations that became opponents without becoming enemies and that more than once were mere puppets in the hands of outsiders. Each was worthy of the other's steel. The diplomatic history of this War of Liberation will be, and I believe is being, written by my friend, the gifted and learned Bulgarian Minister Plenipotentiary in Washington, M. Radeff. Here I shall speak only of what I saw and felt under Turkish fire in Bulgaria.

In the first battle with the Turks the Life Guard Hussar Regiment was engaged. I had joined it as a volunteer a few days before it left its barracks in Tzarskoe Selo, in August 1877. This was the fight from October 12th to 16th at Telish, a small fort on the highroad between Plevna and Sofia. That highway had to be cut by the Russians, when they decided to take Plevna, not by storm, but by blockade. And the operation had to begin at Telish, and at another fort, called Gorny Doubniak, five miles nearer Plevna.

I was proud to enter, with the prospect of a commission in three months, this crack regiment of the Light Cavalry of the Guard, in which I had some young friends and acquaintances. Its commanding officer, Colonel Baron Bogdan Egorovitch Meyendorff, to whom I presented myself, readily accepted me, but not before ascertaining how I could ride. I must have looked rather funny when I got into the saddle on a private's horse—the second squadron having just returned from drill—clothed as I was in my undress Civil Service uniform: a blue swallow-tail coat with silver buttons, with my first decoration, an Italian cross, in my button-hole; white tie, tall silk hat, long black

trousers, and patent-leather shoes. Lieutenant Safonoff, an older school-fellow of mine at the Lyceum, who had been ordered to see how I could ride, tried me for ten minutes, during which I put my horse through its military paces as best I could, having taken on purpose a few special riding lessons. He reported to his chief that I did not know much about riding, but could at least stay in the saddle. That was enough, and a few days later I donned the scarlet dolman and tall busby of my regiment.

The regiment was taken by rail, via Moscow, to the station of Zmerinka near the Rumanian frontier, whence it was marched to the Danube. Before crossing the frontier we were passed in review by General Gourko, who then commanded our cavalry division and had just returned from beyond the Balkans, where he had secured the Shipka Pass. He said to us—and I translate his very words: “I hope you will not all come back, because that would mean that you would not have been in action.” These words were hard. Such things are not usually said to untried soldiers at the beginning of a campaign. But they did us good, making us take our expedition seriously, and in no way diminishing our unshakable conviction that we should win the war. This is that feeling which General Ludendorff considers necessary to victory, and which, as he says in his memoirs, the German Army in the Great War lacked.

On nearing Bucharest I obtained a day’s leave to present myself to Prince Gortchakoff, who had not followed the Emperor into Bulgaria. He and Baron Jomini seemed rather sad to see me go. The Chancellor remembered, perhaps, how some of his old school-fellows had left for the front in 1812 and not returned. When six months later I came back to St. Petersburg wounded, he obtained for me the Emperor’s permission to work in the Chancery pending my complete recovery, and called me ever after “My Hussar”.

We crossed the Danube by a slender pontoon bridge.

While awaiting our turn to cross, I went to look at a large German Red Cross Hospital, where surgeons were amputating a soldier's foot. I could not stand the sight, which made me almost sick, and had to leave. Before the end of the war I had to see and stand many worse things than that.

On our arrival in Bulgaria and at the G.H.Q. at Gorny Studen, the Emperor passed in review his Hussar Regiment, which was always his favourite and the uniform of which he habitually wore. His Majesty looked tired and thin, but he was pleased with us. Next him on his left was Prince Charles of Rumania, who had brought a contingent of his soldiers to take part in the siege of Plevna. He commanded all the blockading forces. This circumstance was what gave rise later to the legend that the Rumanians took Plevna. I heard the Prince say to our commander, "You have many young men in your regiment", and it was true the presence of numerous young volunteers in the ranks could easily give that impression.

Two days before our first battle my fellow-volunteers and I passed an elementary military examination and were promoted to N.C.O.s. This gave us the right to be put in command of small detachments of soldiers, up to a platoon, as acting sub-lieutenants. To me this actually happened at the beginning of the Telish action. After having marched all night as secretly as possible, our regiment reached, just before daybreak, the position from which we were to push a reconnaissance in force against Telish at 7 a.m. The hour we spent standing by our horses in silence, in a grove of big trees, while some artillery was being helped across a deep gulch in front of us, was for us the most trying time of the whole day.

I do not know what the others were feeling, but I remember asking myself whether I had done well to join in the war and answering to myself emphatically, *Yes*. I had at that time, as I have already mentioned, no personal

interest in life save as a field for political work, and was ready to lay it down to help in reaching the aims for which my country fought. Whether such would be the outcome or not was no business or responsibility of mine: on enlisting I had voluntarily given up my free will and had become obliged to do that of my military chiefs. All that remained for me was to do my simple duty, as clearly laid down in our Military Ordinances. The rest would be as it should be. Unhappily, I could not then say, "As God wills", because at that time I was still under the influence of Pissareff's atheism. On our march through Rumania I had been busy thinking out Herbert Spencer's maxim, "Progress is differentiation". And somewhat later, in midwinter in the Balkans, I could not help admiring, in the cold, starry heavens, what I liked to call "the great eternal order of the universe". Besides, I was loath to revert to my pristine faith, so to say under pressure, because I was facing death.

I felt much comfort in keeping inside the narrow limits of my soldier's duty. My post in the second squadron was that of rear flanking N.C.O. of the third platoon. When we were ordered to advance, I had to address myself at once to this duty. Our first squadron rode forward, in serried ranks by platoons, up the hill facing our position, and suddenly we heard violent rifle-firing which met them from the Turkish fort. Some infantry trenches had been dug by the enemy outside the fort. These were charged and taken by our first squadron without dismounting. In a few moments our turn came. When we reached the crest of the hill I saw an open stretch of flat land, partly covered with unharvested maize, and backed by a line of ramparts, from behind which rose clouds of gunpowder-smoke and there rolled unceasingly an incredibly violent rifle-fire. Had the Turks aimed better—in fact, aimed at all—nothing would have been left of our squadron, which advanced at a trot and in dense columns. But the Turks in their surprise and

hurry fired wildly. They had an unlimited supply of cartridges, as we saw three days later, in brimful open tins at the reach of every soldier's hand. They also fired too high, so that we heard thousands of bullets whistle above our heads, but very few struck home.

I concentrated on my duty, which was to look after the dressing of the right second file of my platoon. This was maintained as on parade. Suddenly I heard Sub-Lieutenant Trepoff, who was in command of the second platoon a few yards in front of me, exclaim in French, "*Ça y est*" (There it is), as a bullet passed through his left arm. In the meantime the first squadron had wheeled to the left, and ours advanced in its place. We also came sufficiently near to the fort to observe its frontage, height, and armament—what we had been sent to discover. We then retired, following the first squadron.

While it was on its way at a trot, the horse of one of the privates was shot and fell. The soldier managed to jump free, but had now no horse to ride off on. Then Sub-Lieutenant Snejkoff stopped his own horse, under heavy fire, made the soldier mount behind him, and carried him off unscathed. A painting in our regimental mess commemorated this gallant and humane act. I may add here that those wounded who fell into the hands of the Turks were in those days tortured and killed by the *bashibouzouks* or Turkish irregulars, those troops who had committed the "Bulgarian atrocities". This accounts for the mangled Russian corpses which were found, after Telish had been taken, in the adjoining fields of maize—a scene which furnished the subject for a striking battle-painting by Verestchagin. My volunteer friends and I had decided not to fall into the hands of the Turks alive, so that I kept always in my pocket a small revolver brought from St. Petersburg for this special purpose. Trepoff had to get his wound cared for, and I was appointed in his place to command the second

platoon for the whole of that day. This Trepoff belonged to the Horse Guards, and was one of the officers of the Heavy Cavalry Division attached during the war to the regiments of the Light Division. He became notorious long afterwards from the way in which he put down the revolutionary rising in St. Petersburg in 1905.

After we had finished this reconnoitring, our infantry attack began, and the Hussars were ordered to protect the two batteries which were shelling the fort. While our squadron was waiting its turn, we were sheltered behind a small eminence. Along its crest, in full view of both our regiment and the enemy, our commander, Baron Meyendorff, accompanied by his small staff, rode slowly back and forth, observing the course of the battle. Bullets were reaching us plentifully from beyond the hill, and we were all much impressed by the perfect composure with which he continued to walk his horse between the enemy and us. He had seen warfare in the Caucasus, and knew both how to bear himself under fire and how to teach us by his example.

When time was up, we crossed the hill called Rakitskaya Vysota, and saw a picturesque sight. A great expanse of open, sunlit sward sloped gently towards Telish, not two miles away, joining on our left flank the undulating plains of Western Bulgaria. These were crossed by the macadamized highway from Sofia to Plevna. On the slope were posted quite openly our two batteries of artillery, shelling Telish and thus in a leisurely way helping our infantry to attack it. Close to the guns were drawn up in serried ranks the four platoons of the second squadron, their milk-white horses standing out in splendid relief against the verdant background. Under modern conditions neither the artillerymen nor the cavalry could have remained alive five minutes. But in those days artillery in the field was more decorative than useful, and as the Turks were busy repulsing the infantry attack, our cavalry, even in close formation, did not suffer much.

For us the great difficulty was to keep awake, sitting motionless on our horses in that warm sunshine. We had started at 11 p.m. of the previous day, marched all night, and been in action since 7 a.m. I kept myself from falling asleep only by remembering that I was in command of a platoon and must set an example to my men. Now and then bullets coming from the fort whistled over our heads. One struck a trooper asleep in his saddle, killing him before he could awake. Another bullet passed just above my shoulder, and I heard behind me a dull thud. An N.C.O. reported to me that one of our men was hit in the stomach. I ordered him to be taken to the field dressing-station, which was somewhere far in the rear. Later I learned that the man got quite well again.

By and by, we saw two Turkish soldiers climb a tree about five hundred yards below us on the slope. From there they began shooting at us as at a target. We could do nothing to prevent them. So they went on, without, however, doing us any harm, till they had no more cartridges and went away. Through a small pocket telescope I had bought in St. Petersburg, as a substitute for the field-glasses volunteers were not then allowed to use, I saw very distinctly how the Turks, down below inside Telish, moved about and kept up a continuous fire against the attacking Russian infantry, making an unceasing and terrible din.

About 2 p.m. we saw a long procession of bullock-carts, evidently carrying supplies, appear on the Sofia-Plevna highroad, heading for Telish. At once our splendid 5th Battery of the Guards Horse Artillery, which was attached to our cavalry brigade during the whole war, turned its fire on that convoy. The very first shell struck the head of the procession, scattering men, beasts, and supplies. Other effective shells followed, the escort fled, but the stolid oxen finally carried their loads into the fort. In the same way, three months later the bullock-carts with our wounded,

including myself, entered Philippopolis in spite of the Turkish artillery fire.

So far the day had for us been fine, interesting, and even amusing. Towards nightfall, however, it turned to tragedy. Our infantry attack was repulsed. It ought, so it appears, never to have been attempted. The Guard Chasseurs (light infantry regiment) had been detached to demonstrate against Telish and prevent any succour being given from there to the fort of Gorny Doubniak; while the latter only was to be taken on that day, and was attacked by all the rest of the Guard infantry. Whether the commander of this regiment, Colonel Tchelistcheff, misunderstood or disregarded this disposition, I do not know. But he certainly miscalculated the effects of the new Turkish system of firing, which Russian troops had till then never experienced and had not been taught to counteract. The Guard Chasseurs had suffered very heavily at the hands of the Turks near Varna in 1828, and the regiment was anxious to retrieve that former discomfiture. The attack was admirably begun over the perfectly open ground which we had crossed in the morning. But the Turkish fire had evidently grown steadier, and once it began to take effect our men were mowed down almost as by machine-gun fire to-day. The regiment had no reserves to support it, and, suffering heavy losses, had to beat a retreat, which I witnessed.

To cover this retreat our second squadron was posted first in the line of the three squadrons of our regiment, which were all drawn up to protect the retreating infantry against an expected attack of the Turkish irregular cavalry. The first wounded to pass us were those who could walk, and were trying to reach the field dressing-station. I remember how two men, leaning on each other and on their rifles, sat down panting in front of my platoon. I asked my squadron commander's permission to dismount with my friend and fellow-volunteer, Count Alexander Bobrinskoy, and see

what could be done to help these men. One of them had two bullet-holes through his chest, the other, one. My friend and I had some packages of Red Cross first-aid dressings we had brought from St. Petersburg. To begin with, I gave the soldiers a good drink of brandy from my flask. This cheered them up. Then we put some of the pink wadding meant to stop bleeding on the front and back orifices made by the bullets, and tied up the wounds with the triangular bandages. Soon both were able to get up and continue their march to the distant dressing-station. I came to know later that the doctors there were mightily astonished to see these men arrive with their wounds dressed. They said it was not badly done, but that we ought to have stopped only the front bullet-holes, to avoid internal haemorrhage. But our patients were strong and splendid men. I was told that ultimately both recovered.

Somewhat later we saw a group of about sixty soldiers bearing in their midst the regimental colours. This group was all that was left of the rank and file of this regiment, which a few hours before had attacked, four thousand strong. Our commander ordered our buglers to sound the customary salute, as on parade, when the colours filed past. This was a most solemn and impressive scene. We were under orders to charge the Turkish cavalry as soon as it should be sighted. But none appeared. Evidently our presence there made the Turks believe pursuit impossible. When this disposition of the enemy became apparent, our third squadron was ordered to dismount and search the fields of maize, stretching towards the fort, for all the wounded that could be found. The dead were to be left where they lay. Many wounded were thus rescued, but not all. When, four days later, Telish was finally taken, many mutilated Russian soldiers' corpses were found in these fields; and a solemn funeral service was then held on the spot, in the presence of a paraded infantry brigade.

The storming of the fort Gorny Doubniak was achieved at last only towards sunset. The losses were great, as General Gourko was unsparing of his troops. This we could well expect, after what he had said to us on the frontier. His strategical aim had been attained: Plevna was surrounded and cut off from Sofia, but the Telish failure had to be retrieved and Telish taken. This Gourko set about doing in a highly practical and scientific way, without any further loss of life. He ordered the Chasseurs to join the reserves, and left our cavalry brigade to hold the commanding heights of Rakita. By nightfall our two regiments were told to light a big fire of logs for every five men. Wood was plentiful and accessible, so at night the whole eminence was dotted with camp-fires—enough to warm a division of infantry.

In the evening of that day I was relieved of my command, and was ordered to set up our section of a field post-service between our camp and Gourko's headquarters at Gorny Doubniak, a distance of about four miles. For our part, we had to maintain three posts of three men each. But while I was stationing the soldiers, I noticed that between them and the enemy, which our line was flanking, there were no outposts at all. As our men had consequently to serve as vedettes also, I asked to have these men reinforced by two more soldiers at each post—which was willingly done. During this night and the following four nights nothing happened, for the Turks in those days lacked military initiative. Those inside Telish were also thoroughly exhausted. Both our regiments remained, however, night and day ready for action, without unsaddling our horses and without pitching our little tents. These tents were made in sections, so that we three volunteers of the second squadron, Bobrinskoy, Solovoy, and I, could only pitch our tent when we were together. All the volunteers received no Government rations and had to fend for themselves. The soldier named Shchesiouk who acted as my batman was an excellent fellow and

a good cook, and during these days we went together to forage in the neighbouring abandoned village of Rakita. I never supposed it was so hard to catch a fowl with one's hands. I was hampered too by my long cavalry cloak and heavy sword. We managed it, however, and, sitting on the ground beside our horses, we cooked and ate the captured fowls.

Through my telescope I could see the Turks diligently digging new earthworks round their fort, evidently expecting a renewed infantry attack. In this they were mistaken. Gourko, when he had set everything in order in Gorny Doubniak, moved seven more batteries to Telish, and on the morning of October 16th placed them in a circle round the fort, just outside the range of the Turkish guns. At 9 a.m. began the concentrated bombardment of the Telish fort by nine field batteries. Soon the buildings inside caught fire. At 9.30 the powder magazine blew up. At 10 a.m. the white flag was hoisted. Firing ceased, the Prince Tzere-teleff, at that time Gourko's orderly, who before the war had been Second Secretary in Constantinople, was sent to the Turkish Pasha to accept his surrender. Tzereteleff had enlisted at the very beginning of the war, and had accompanied Gourko on his first trans-Balkan raid. Later he was appointed Russian Consul-General at Philippopolis, and worked out, with Alexander Isvolsky as his secretary, the excellent though short-lived statute of the Autonomous Province of Eastern Rumelia. Thus Telish was taken without another rifle-shot being fired.

Before the surrender a group of Turkish irregular cavalry, with some infantry, tried to escape from Telish. Our third squadron and one squadron of the Guard Lancers were sent in pursuit. Some hand-to-hand fighting ensued, in which Lieutenant Anjou of the Lancers got a bayonet wound in the lip. Our squadron also crossed the Sofia highroad, but met no enemy. Here for the first time I saw

the corpse of a man killed in action. It was a Bulgarian peasant with his head nearly blown off, lying in a field of maize. On returning to the camp at night we rode through the Telish fort. The ground was strewn with thousands of cartridges, which exploded if stepped on by a horse. Open petroleum tins full of cartridges stood on the ground all along the parapets, in readiness for the expected renewal of our infantry attack. To the right and left of the high-road Turkish peasants, men, women, and children, were sitting or lying silently in the dust. These must have been refugees from the neighbouring Turkish villages, who had sought shelter in the fort from the advance of the Russians and from the vengeance of the Bulgarians.

On the following day the regiment took a rest, and I rode to the distant Bulgarian village of Poradim, our G.H.Q., where, I had been told, a field-telegraph office could be found. I wanted to telegraph to my father, then Governor of Minsk, that I was well, after our first battle. I found the little office, but learned that no private telegrams were accepted. Till the war was over I was unable to send any news of myself to my father. He, on his side, learning from the papers that my regiment had been engaged, wrote to some friends at G.H.Q., asking that I be attached to its Diplomatic Chancery. But I knew nothing of this, and wanted only to remain in the fighting line to the end, looking down with disfavour—if not worse—on all staffs, A.D.C.s, orderlies, and the like.

On my way to Poradim I rode through the village of Svinary, and saw rows on rows of Russian and Turkish wounded lying on the ground and being tended by all the military and Red Cross surgeons we could muster. These wounded were waiting patiently for their turn to be bandaged. Doctor Haussmann, of the admirable Russian Red Cross Mounted Detachment sent out by our Grand Duchess Maria Fedorovna (the Dowager Empress lately

deceased in Copenhagen), told me that a Turkish soldier whom he had bandaged kissed the red cross on his armlet in gratitude, having been told that Russians always killed their prisoners. No wonder that this armlet was treasured by my friend as a souvenir!

Among the prisoners taken at Telish were two young English surgeons, who wore on their left arm a white band with a red crescent on it. This was the first time that this symbol made its appearance. It was at once admitted by the Russian military commanders as an equivalent of the Red Cross. The Grand Duke Nicholas, our Commander-in-Chief, invited these men to his table, and ordered employment to be given them under Professor Piragoff, Head of the Russian Field Medical Department, until they could be sent to St. Petersburg and placed there at the disposal of the British Embassy. They had been sent by the Red Cross Society of Stafford House in London to help the Turks as medical officers. The Red Crescent was not recognized internationally as a symbol of equal standing with the Red Cross till the Second Hague Peace Conference of 1907. It is a pleasure for me to recollect that I there helped to obtain this recognition by seconding the motion of Turhan Pasha, the first Turkish Plenipotentiary, and by adding that, in this case, the Cross and the Crescent were not religious symbols but heraldic emblems.

The blockade of Plevna having been assured, our regiment was sent on forepost duty opposite the bridge of the River Vid, where Osman Pasha ultimately tried to break through the besieging armies. We were soon relieved by a regiment of Rumanian Hussars, in whose ranks, as a volunteer, was that young Prince Ghika whom I was to know later as Minister of Rumania in Berlin. We lunched frugally and amicably on a hunch of bread and a tin of sardines while waiting for further orders.

As our Commissariat Department was very inefficiently organized, all the cavalry of the Guard was sent west of Plevna for foraging purposes. I shall never forget the enthusiasm with which our appearance in the Bulgarian villages we rode through was welcomed. On our approach men, women, and children rushed out to meet us, bringing with them bread, fowls, honey, and the best of everything they had. They even kissed our horses and the feet of our soldiers, knowing that after five hundred years' servitude to the Turks they would never again have to acknowledge them their masters.

In the abandoned Turkish villages our squadron collected about two hundred head of cattle and great numbers of sheep and goats, and even captured many pigs, big and little, although I must admit that I do not know how these animals got there, as Moslems are not supposed to breed them. On our way back I was ordered to take charge, with ten Hussars, of all this loot and bring it into camp twenty miles away. The difficulty on this march was that horses, cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs have each their own gait, whilst all had to advance at a uniform cavalry pace. The pigs were especially troublesome, because they would run away and hide in the oak scrub through which our way often led. At last we reached the River Vid, which we had to cross at a rather deep ford, so that all the animals had to swim at least a part of the river. I stationed my ten men in the river, to prevent the animals from being carried away by the strong current. The oxen and cows crossed easily, and so did the sheep, although I am afraid some of them were lost. But the most troublesome were the goats, which proved to be very bad swimmers. The swine crossed all right, though I remember having read that, should they be made to swim far, they would scratch their throats out. The supplies brought in by this expedition were of great help in providing rations for our beleaguering

force, which by that time had reached a hundred thousand men.

Soon after this all our cavalry was moved south into the Balkans. When the war was ended, the Life Guard Hussars were granted a gold clasp on their busby inscribed, "For Telish "

## CHAPTER X

### AN ENCOUNTER WITH TURKISH TROOPS UNDER BRITISH COMMAND

Plevna did not surrender until November 28/10 December, 1877. On that morning I had just come back with the other men of my platoon from night outpost duty in front of the Turkish pass and fortified post of Lutikovo. I was washing myself in our tent when I heard loud shouts of "Hurrah!" and, looking out, saw a Cossack officer galloping through our camp waving his cap and proclaiming in exultation, "Plevna has surrendered!".

This was glorious news. One hundred thousand Russian soldiers, including the Guard, after having been unexpectedly detained for three months by Osman Pasha and his army corps of forty-five thousand men in the extemporized but formidable entrenched camp of Plevna, were now free to continue their march on Constantinople. But winter had set in. Could the army advance now? All European authorities, those of Germany included, thought this was impossible and considered our campaign ended.

General Gourko, however, who had been placed in command of our "Western Detachment", was of another opinion. Knowing the morale and the endurance of his troops, and not being inclined to spare them, he was silently preparing this unexpected advance. He had crossed the Balkans once —the summer before—and was determined to do it again, in spite of the winter season. How then did he organize this adventurous enterprise? And what did the Turks, commanded by two British superior officers, do to oppose the Russians? By a series of able manœuvres of the cavalry and infantry of the Guard, Gourko succeeded in driving the Turks, almost without bloodshed, from their well-fortified mountain positions of Pravetz, Orhanie, and Etropol, forcing

them back to the last range of the Balkan Mountains, where these were crossed by the Sofia-Plevna highroad at a point called Arabkonak. A reconnaissance party from our regiment under Captain Volkoff advanced even beyond that fort, and secured a footing on the southern slope of the Balkans, in a small abandoned Bulgarian village called Tchouriak.

I remember being again in charge for some days of the regimental field-post between Etropol and Orhanie, when I heard in Etropol that the regiment had been engaged near Orhanie the day before, and that Count Vladimir Bobrinskoy, Aide-de-Camp of the Regiment and brother of my friend and messmate, had been wounded. Having some dispatches to carry to the front, I started at sunrise for Orhanie, finding my way through the snow-clad mountains with the help of an excellent Austrian map of Bulgaria, which I had bought in Bucharest and carried on my breast under my military cloak. I still keep the map as a souvenir, because part of it was later drenched with my blood when I was wounded.

I rode alone, heard artillery fire in front of me, and entered the plain of Orhanie just as the Turks had retreated towards Arabkonak, abandoning an elaborately fortified position at the entrance of the defile beyond Orhanie. As my regiment was bivouacking outside that town I stopped there for half an hour, and learned that the day before the Hussars had had a brush with some Circassian horsemen after occupying Orhanie. Vladimir Bobrinskoy had gone unnecessarily into the firing-line, taken a rifle and begun shooting, when a Circassian bullet hit him in the knee. He had at once been sent with his brother to the central hospital in Bogot, near Plevna, where he died a few days later of lockjaw, as a consequence of his wound.

Carrying my dispatches farther, I entered the defile through which the Sofia highroad wound its way, glistening

in the winter sun. At a Turkish guard-house near the road I stopped to rest my horse and to lunch. There had been some fighting here the day before. The guard-house was wrecked and empty, and the corpses of two Turkish soldiers lay sprawling in the courtyard. I soon overtook a long file of munition-carts wending its way to the front. When one of the soldiers learned that I was in charge of the field-post, he asked me if I could take a letter from him to be sent home. I undertook to do so, and told him that all such letters were forwarded without stamps or any other payment. This letter was addressed to some village in the Province of Pensa, my father's birthplace. When I was about to ride on, the soldier, seeing in me only an N.C.O. in a very worn uniform, in spite of my volunteer's stripes, asked me to accept a copper coin of five copecks for my trouble. He insisted on this tip so pressingly that, in order not to offend him, I accepted it and long kept the coin as a souvenir.

I spent the night in the open, joining a group of soldiers who had lit a fire at the roadside, and with whom was a gentle old regimental priest. Somebody had hung up a blanket as a screen against the cold wind. A place was offered me there, and I slept soundly till daybreak. After another ride of a couple of hours I reached our fortified position on the Shandornik height, opposite that of Arabkonak. There General Rauch, for whom I carried dispatches, had fixed his headquarters. I began climbing the precipitous mountain towards our fort, through thick brushwood in which there was not even a path. But I met a soldier carrying some papers the General was sending to Orhanie, so we exchanged packages and I returned to where I had left my horse. I regret not having taken a look at our Shandornik position, which was so high that the battle between it and the Arabkonak fort was fought for several weeks above the clouds. But I did take a ride beyond our

outposts into the no-man's-land lying between the two positions. All was silent there in the noonday sunshine and empty, the Turks keeping passively to their heights. On turning back I was glad to reach Orhanie by nightfall and rejoin my squadron.

In the meanwhile Gourko's sappers had built a road fit for artillery and transport from the Vratshesha Valley to the summit of the principal Balkan range, while two platoons of our Hussars and two of the Guard Lancers went alternately for two days to Tchouriak, to help a squadron of the Astrakhan Dragoons which was permanently stationed at that far advanced post. An encounter had recently taken place there with some Circassian cavalry. On December 11th/23rd I asked to be allowed to accompany our two platoons that were due to leave for Tchouriak under the command of Sub-Lieutenant Pantchoulidzeff. Before I could obtain this permission the Hussars had already left, and I had to try to catch up with them alone. Proceeding first by the road the sappers had begun building, I soon had to follow, through the snow, the tracks of our horses which had passed there a few hours earlier. Fortunately, I soon overtook an officer who was also going to Tchouriak and was escorted by a couple of Cossacks. These had no difficulty in finding their way, and I had a very pleasant chat as we rode with this officer, Colonel Zamotchnikoff, a highly cultured expert in geodesy, who was destined to play an important part in the following day's experiences. About 2 p.m. we arrived in Tchouriak, where about 110 sabres were then collected. In the evening eleven Bulgarian volunteers joined us, armed with Turkish rifles and brimful of patriotic enthusiasm.

We supped with the commander of the Dragoon squadron, Captain Moravsky, whose batman prepared some excellent cutlets for us. Before we had finished, Colonel Stavrovsky of the General Staff arrived, unexpectedly for us, from

General Gourko with his orders. He opened a big military map on the table, and told us that on the following morning we should have to reconnoitre three different ways of reaching the Sofia Valley, while he and Zamotchnikoff would ascend the Tchouriak mountain at daybreak. Later, word was brought to us that the neighbouring Bulgarian village of Potop, through which the Hussars had to ride, had just been occupied by several hundred Turkish soldiers. We did not believe this information, attributing it to the usual exaggeration of popular newsmongers.

When we started at 9 a.m. Pantchoulidzeff put me in command of the first platoon, and told me to lead the way to Potop. Stavrovsky and Zamotchnikoff had already begun their climb. Riding ahead, I took with me two privates, of whom I sent one to the right and one to the left of the path leading to Potop. Hardly had I passed the ruined mill where the recent fight with the Circassians had taken place and mounted a hillock, when I saw on the opposite hill, about a mile away, the houses of Potop, and noticed to my surprise a group of about two hundred Turkish infantry, with their red fezes, marching with difficulty through the deep snow towards Tchouriak. And half-way up the hill leading to the mountain which the Colonel had just ascended I counted five squadrons of regular cavalry advancing in the direction of that very mountain.

It was evidently our duty to stop this advance or at least to delay it till the Colonel had come down. So I rode on and ordered the two men to do the same, till we should draw the enemy's fire. Then we would return to Pantchoulidzeff to report. Soon we heard a Turkish infantry bugle announce our presence, and the enemy at once opened fire. This firing was not so vigorous as that which had met us at Telish, but was still pretty strong, and the bullets fell into the snow around us with a hissing sound. While we

trotted back I was expecting—I do not know why—that I would be hit in the right shoulder, but none of the bullets took effect. On hearing the firing, Pantchoulidzeff advanced in support, and on receiving my report told me that the Colonel was still on his mountain. As we had to help him, I asked for two more Dragoons, and then the five of us recommenced the advance, which I ordered to continue till the enemy should open fire again. This the Turks did, not only from the plain, where the infantry was advancing, but also from the hill, where the Turkish horsemen had already reached the foot of the Colonel's mountain. On beginning to fire both the Turkish detachments stopped, possibly expecting our reconnoitring patrol to be followed by our principal forces.

Having seen all we wanted, we turned back at a walk—the Hussars and Dragoons vying with each other to remain last. As it was a spirited thing to do, I did not hurry them, my rank allowing me to bring up the rear. Pantchoulidzeff, to whom I reported, informed me that Stavrovsky and Zamotchnikoff had now returned and had seen and approved of our *djigitovka* (warlike cavalry display). I was ordered to place a line of outposts at the entrance of the Tchouriak gorge, and to observe the movements of the enemy. At the same time the Dragoons were posted on foot with fixed bayonets near the old mill, forming an ambush.

What our enemy thought and did on that Christmas Eve has been excellently told in the interesting book by Colonel Valentine Baker, formerly of the British Guards, who was then in command of the Turks marching on Tchouriak.<sup>1</sup> This officer complains bitterly of the indifference shown by the Turkish Commander-in-Chief to his repeated reports, pointing out Tchouriak as the spot on which the Russians were about to concentrate their armies

<sup>1</sup> See *War in Bulgaria, Personal Experiences of Valentine Baker Pasha of the Imperial Ottoman Army*. London, 1879. 2 vols., with maps.

to cross the Balkans. At last—so he relates—a battalion of Turkish infantry militia, only two hundred strong, and five squadrons of Egyptian cavalry were put at his disposal, to make a reconnaissance of Tchouriak on December 24th. This detachment arrived in Potop on the preceding evening, and before it had started on the following day the Circassian outposts, who had had a brush with the Russians a few days before, reported that the Russians were advancing from Tchouriak on Potop.

Baker Pasha put his friend Major Allix, also of the Guards, in command of the cavalry, and ordered him to open fire on the approaching Cossacks. He took us for Cossacks because of a clever stratagem of Gourko, who had ordered all the Guards cavalry to keep on the white summer covers of their caps, hiding the scarlet ones of the Hussars, the blue of the Lancers, etc. Baker Pasha writes further that with his very good field-glasses he saw in the village of Tchouriak a battalion of infantry and a regiment of Cossacks. He must have taken our dismounted Dragoons with their fixed bayonets, and the Bulgarian volunteers, for infantry. And it might well have been hard to estimate the exact number of our troops, owing to the mountainous character of the country. Baker Pasha adds that a Turkish horse was wounded. But this could have been done only by a Turkish bullet, because the Russians in the course of the whole day did not fire a single shot.

Having come to the above conclusion, Baker Pasha ordered his troops to stop and to entrench themselves on the Potop hill, and to continue observing the Russians. Had he pushed on another mile, none of us would have lived to tell the tale, as it would have been impossible for us either to retreat or to surrender or to receive any succour from beyond the Balkans. Gourko's plan of making Tchouriak the pivot of his winter operations would then have failed; and who knows when the Imperial troops

would have reached Adrianople and Constantinople? As it was, we could see the Turks rapidly digging trenches and erecting huts, as was their wont, on the Potop hill, and a Hussar I sent to the foot of it to reconnoitre reported that neither infantry nor cavalry was to be seen. Perhaps the circumstance that it was Christmas Eve had also something to do with Baker Pasha's wish to go home with his friend to headquarters instead of engaging in a desperate fight and camping out another night in the snow and cold.

At nightfall I was ordered to call in all our outposts and leave one only at the mill. And once more round Captain Moravsky's hospitable board we all met, and were gratified to hear Colonel Stavrovsky's complimentary comments on the events of the day. Years later, when he was a lieutenant-general and commander of the Ural Cossacks and I a Minister Plenipotentiary, he told me in St. Petersburg that we had been sent into the Sofia Valley only to mask his own and Zamotchnikoff's movements, which aimed at ascertaining whether there was a Turkish fortified camp beyond the Arabkonak fort, as had been reported to Gourko. From the top of the Tchouriak mountain he obtained a perfect view of the whole Turkish position, and made sure that there was nothing there to hinder the execution of Gourko's plans.

On our way back to Orhanie on the following day we met Gourko himself, who was probably riding to Tchouriak to have a look at it himself before sending his troops across the Balkans in midwinter.

## CHAPTER XI

CROSSING THE BALKANS IN MIDWINTER. AMONG  
THE WOUNDED

Three days after the Tchouriak expedition Gourko's army began crossing the Balkans. Our Hussar regiment left its camp at Vratchesha at 7 a.m. on December 16th/28th. It reached its bivouac at 7 p.m. the following day, after a march of thirty-six hours. The road our sappers had built, which reached only to the top of the Tchouriak Pass, was reserved for the infantry and field artillery, while all our cavalry and some guns were sent by untrodden paths across the Oumourgatch Mountain, whose snowy peak is visible from Sofia. Prince Tzereteleff, who, besides being a first-rate diplomat and soldier, was also something of a wag, drew a pen-and-ink sketch representing a snow-clad peak with a goat on the top of it. Underneath it he wrote: "A goat has passed here, consequently artillery can also pass." Nevertheless, this came true, for our 5th battery of horse artillery accompanied us across the Oumourgatch.

As soon as the ascent began, the regiment dismounted and marched in single file. Each soldier cut himself a staff from the dense forest growth through which we passed, making us look more like pilgrims than Hussars of the Guard. In negotiating rocks or ascending the bed of a mountain stream the men used their horses' tails to help themselves along. What this procession looked like may be seen in the oil-painting by Svertchkoff which hangs in the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg. Two or three of the horses fell over precipices, and some of the soldiers were severely frostbitten. Sub-Lieutenant Pantchoulidzeff of the Horse Guards—brother of my comrade—had fallen down and was half-buried in the snow not far from Tchouriak. A private of our regiment stumbled over him, and, seeing

the body of an officer, carried him on his back to that village. The rescued man barely escaped having his frozen feet amputated. On the other hand, one of our volunteers, seeing a private of another regiment in the same plight, carried him likewise on his back into camp, and when asked who he was and what he was doing, replied, "Ich bin der Otto von Löwenstern", as he belonged to a noble family of Livonia and spoke German better than Russian.

The soldiers advanced in single file, struggling through the snow, and towards evening great fires of logs were lit along the track about every hundred yards. Progress was slow, with long delays whenever something obstructed the march. All our guns were dismounted and dragged separately on improvised sledges, each by about a hundred infantrymen of the 4th Archangelogorodsky Regiment. Gun-carriages were hauled up in the same way, each wheel carried separately. The shells were distributed among the soldiers, who carried two each in their hands. And at one of the camp-fires I found a group of these infantrymen seated around it, having placed these live shells in the snow between them and the fire. I saw also our "dynamite horse", which carried the cartridges for blowing up railways and telegraph-lines, standing next to the fire while its leader was warming himself. Yet no accidents happened. Every man had received three days' rations of rye biscuits. Besides these I had a tin of preserved *stchee* (Russian cabbage soup), and some rum in my flask. My batman, Shchesiouk, and I during our march ate and drank of both together, like brothers.

It had been raining in the valley and was freezing hard higher up, so that I could hardly bend the sleeves of my greatcoat, so stiffly frozen was the sodden cloth. All through the night I plodded on, knowing that if I sat down to rest, or if I fell asleep, I should freeze, as some soldiers did. By daybreak I had overtaken the Life Guard Dragoon

Regiment which marched in front of us; then I slowed down until I was again with the Hussars. When we were nearing the highest point on the Oumourgatch Pass, a violent snowstorm began just as we were leaving the shelter of the forest. This blizzard prevented General Dandeville from crossing the Balkans that morning by the Zlatitsa Pass, about twenty miles east of the Arabkonak fort. He lost 800 men frozen and disabled, and could not debouch on the southern slope of the Balkans in time to cut off the Turkish line of retreat towards Philippopolis, as Gourko had planned, while Gourko himself blocked the road to Sofia.

We got through, but it was very difficult. Going downhill was even harder. I fell at least a hundred times in the snow during our descent to Tchouriak, and, though I was not hurt, I was wet from the soles of my feet to my waist. We reached Tchouriak about 4 p.m., Baker Pasha's Turks having been easily driven away by our vanguard. We bivouacked about four miles beyond, in the Bulgarian village of Eleshnitza. When remounting I discovered that my saddle was covered with a half-inch layer of snow and ice. I slept in a dismantled Bulgarian hut, on its earthen floor, with no stove or fire of any kind, and covered only with my soldier's greatcoat. We were allowed to rest the whole of the following day. At daybreak on December 19th/1st January, when we attacked the retreating Turks in the valley of Tashkisen, I woke perfectly fresh and rested, without even a cold in the head, in spite of all the exposure we had experienced. The Balkans had been crossed.

Our 3rd platoon of the 2nd squadron, under Sub-Lieutenant Kroupensky, the most enterprising young officer in the regiment, was sent, together with the 1st platoon of the 1st squadron of the Dragoons, to reconnoitre the village of Dolni-Comartzi, whither the Turks from Arabkonak were expected to retreat, and where the detachment

of Dandeville was supposed to have stopped them. We reached this village before the Turks, while the Volynsky infantry regiment of the Guard was storming the fortified position of Tashkisen. From where we were we could see, as from the stalls of a theatre, the Russian advance in open formation, up the snow-covered incline leading to the Turkish entrenchments. The regiment did its work admirably, and as soon as the Turks saw that their defeat was unavoidable, their infantry poured out in the direction of Dolni-Comartzi. Having only cavalry, we could not stop their retreat towards Philippopolis, but only pursue them. We came every morning on their smouldering camp-fires; and in a single Bulgarian village Kroupensky's platoon without dismounting made prisoners of a hundred Turkish infantrymen and two officers.

By this time the spirit of the Turks was broken. Rumours of an armistice on their part began to circulate, and this appeared the more probable since Prince Sviatopolk-Mirsky and Skobeleff, crossing the Balkans near Shipka, had on the Russian Christmas Day achieved the surrender to them of the whole Turkish Army concentrated at that point.

At our bivouac on January 1st/13th we were joined by a regiment of Cossacks coming from Shipka. And all the Russian forces now streamed down into the valleys of Thrace, like a long-pent-up torrent, submerging Philippopolis and Adrianople, and rapidly reaching the gates of Constantinople. I was not to get that far. On January 2nd/14th, when our brigade and the Cossack regiment were reconnoitring Philippopolis, I was severely wounded, and had to lie there for a fortnight till the armistice had been signed in Adrianople and I could leave for Russia.

Being in the vanguard of Gourko's forces, we were the first to approach the capital of Rumelia. The day was fine and sunny, but to our astonishment, even here, so far south of the Balkans, the ground was covered with snow.

Our way was pointed out to us by the straight line of the Sofia-Philippopolis macadamized highroad—one of those excellent thoroughfares with which Midhat Pasha, who was soon to become the father of the Turkish Constitution, had endowed Bulgaria with the help of Bulgarian peasant statute-labour.

The Turkish Army in the wake of which we were marching had turned south, crossing the Maritza River, and was being dealt with by our infantry of the Guard, led principally by General Count Paul A. Shouvaloff, under whom as our Ambassador I was to serve in Berlin fifteen years later. So we had only to encounter some scattered Turkish forces and those Turkish refugees who were fleeing from Bulgaria. We were ordered to ascertain how and by whom Philippopolis was defended, and to take it.

When nearing the Bulgarian village of Stroево we heard firing and thought that some Turkish soldiers had been surrounded in one of the houses, as had happened the day before. Our squadron was ordered to advance at a trot. The villagers told us that the enemy was beyond Stroево, and our commander bade us draw swords and prepare lances. Soon we saw a row of bullock-carts stretched along the highroad, and a group of about a hundred men standing about these carts and firing at us. Being ordered to "thrust and cut", we attacked them in platoon column, opening out to the right and left of the highroad. Hand-to-hand fighting ensued, in which the Turks fired from behind the carts, where we could not reach them with our sabres. In this way we were losing many men, having stopped when the end of the carts was reached. I thought it silly to stand stock-still to be shot. Four Turks were crossing from one cart to the next—a distance of about twenty yards—and I, obeying orders, charged down on them, while the chief N.C.O. of our platoon, Mihaleff, standing within a few yards of me, was firing his revolver. I struck the Turk



THE LIFEGUARD HUSSARS CROSS THE BALKANS

*From the oil-painting by Sverchkoff in the Winter Palace, St. Petersburg*



nearest me on the neck with my sabre with all my strength, and saw him fall. Continuing my gallop, I saw the three other Turks aim at me and fire when within about twenty yards. I felt suddenly a heavy blow on my right shoulder, as if a big stone had struck me. A bullet which had evidently been aimed at my chest entered my right arm instead, owing to a sudden swerve of my galloping horse. The horse stopped, because another bullet had hit it in the left cheek and remained under its mane, and still another had pierced its neck. But before these men could fire again one of our Hussars, on the other side of the road, fell on them and cut them down. I cut down another Turk who was within reach of my sabre, but after that could not lift my right arm any more. I began only then—some minutes after being wounded—to feel a burning pain inside my arm and shoulder. I felt something warm and sticky in my hand, and, looking down, saw that it was blood. Then I took my sabre into my left hand, so as not to let it fall, and walked my horse out of the mêlée. My batman, Shchesiouk, on seeing me wounded, accompanied me to our platoon assistant surgeon, who dressed my wound with the last packet I had kept in my pocket. I was told that no bone had been broken. My right arm was fastened down under my sheepskin vest and my greatcoat, and I got on my horse again. In the meantime our squadron had dismounted and a platoon of Dragoons was advancing along the road, firing at the Turks, who were soon all killed.

Seeing that our brigade was following the Dragoons, and that our regimental surgeon, Dr. Bergmann, was also approaching, I rode up to him to ask what was to be done with the killed and wounded. He said they were all to be put on the bullock-carts and were to follow the regiment, which was continuing its advance to Philippopolis. Shchesiouk took charge of my horse "Lycean", which quite recovered later from its wounds. As for me, he laid me down in one

of the carts with another wounded Hussar and the dead body of a third. Then began, and continued till nightfall, a most trying and painful journey for us wounded. The regiment soon came in sight of Philippopolis and advanced towards it across garnered maize-fields. As each wheel of the springless cart hit the frozen stubble, it caused acute pain in my wound. The wound was such an unusual one that it was at first believed to have been caused by two bullets, as there were four openings in my arm and shoulder. But I was actually hit by only one bullet. It went straight through my arm, which was holding my sword thrust forward, and then through my shoulder and neck, breaking off a piece of my collar-bone. Believing it to be only a flesh-wound, I was not at all anxious about it, and ate with good appetite the bread and eggs I had with me. From where I lay I saw the towering heights of Philippopolis and the Turkish infantry and artillery coming out to meet us, and could hear their fire. After discovering that the city was defended by a regiment of infantry and four batteries, our brigade withdrew and stopped for the night at the village of Tzarevo, about six miles to the north. The city itself was not taken till the following evening, by the 1st squadron of the Dragoons under Captain Bourago and the 3rd squadron of the Hussars.

At Tzarevo our regimental surgeon bandaged my wound and gave me some cotton-wool and two or three bandages besides, because he was to leave with the regiment on the next day. In the evening our Colonel, Baron Meyendorff, came to see me and paid me some compliments on what had happened during the day. I learned three months later that I had been awarded for Tchouriak the soldier's St. George's Cross of the 4th grade, and for the last encounter that of the 3rd grade. The Colonel had the kindness to leave Shchesiouk with me. At daybreak the regiment continued its march towards Adrianople and Constantinople,

and I did not see it again until six months later in St. Petersburg.

About noon all of us wounded were put into Bulgarian bullock-carts and directed towards Philippopolis. When we got in sight of the town we were surprised by being met by Turkish gunfire. The Bulgarian peasants to whom the carts belonged promptly hid themselves. But their sturdy bullocks continued to advance unmoved, and brought us unharmed into the streets of the northern part of the city on the left bank of the Maritza River. There we chose a two-storied Bulgarian house that was empty as our quarters, and here we stayed while for two days the battle raged around Philippopolis. After sundown of the first day Captain Bourago occupied the railway station south of the Maritza, and the whole city became ours. His attack was so unexpected that the Turkish Commander-in-Chief, Suleiman Pasha, had only just time to escape on a locomotive, and Bourago and his friends enjoyed the excellent supper which had been prepared for the Turks at the station. But the principal forces of the retreating Turkish Army were assembled on the southern bank of the Maritza, and it took Count Shouvaloff three more days' hard fighting to drive them into the Rhodope Mountains and so disperse them.

As the wounded in our house—forty-two in number—had nobody to care for them, nor any medicines or bandages, I sent Shchesiuk to try to find a doctor. Two of the men were Cossacks who had had a leg amputated. As the bridge over the river had been blown up by the Turks, my batman had to cross by a ford some five miles away. When he got back in the evening, he reported that he had found some doctors, but they had told him they had three thousand wounded to dress and could do nothing for us. They gave him, however, some cotton-wool and yards of bandages. And as the shops in the city were already reopened, he

brought me some tea, wine, sugar, and other provisions, which were most welcome.

My wound was growing worse. Having lost a great deal of blood, I felt very weak. I could hardly sit up on the wooden floor on which I was lying and bandage my right arm and shoulder with my left hand. Shchesiouk was unable to help me, having no idea of first-aid. I had a high temperature, but could not measure it, having no thermometer. But fortunately the two perforated wounds, each several inches long, were of themselves discharging all foreign matter, without giving it time to infect the body. Our other wounded were in a still worse plight. The two N.C.O.s of my platoon, Rasbitsky and Rakoff, who had both been struck by bullets in the stomach, died within three days, and I had them buried near the neighbouring Church of St. John. Our squadron sergeant-major, Protsenko, had been killed outright, and our platoon had suffered the heaviest losses of them all. Only on the sixth day did the first Red Cross detachment reach us—that of the 1st infantry regiment of the Guard—and we could at last have our wounds properly dressed. This detachment had, however, immediately to follow its army corps in its advance on Constantinople. All the while our infantry had been flowing through Philippopolis with the usual loud songs of a victorious army. By the time the battle south of the Maritsa had been won, a pontoon bridge had been thrown across the river, and I rode over the bridge into the centre of the city, met there Dr. Haussmann of the Red Cross, and was at an end of all anxiety about an uncared-for wound.

On January 20th Dr. Haussmann and I happened to meet on the street General Veliaminoff, who was in command of the troops in the city, and from him we learned that the armistice had been signed the day before. Now, the war being over, my friend and I could go back to Russia without any further delay. Haussmann had just

learned that his sister, one of the Red Cross staff at Bucharest, had fallen ill of typhus, and I wished to get home without waiting for the general evacuation of the wounded. So we left Philippopolis together on the following morning for the Shipka Pass in a one-horse Turkish *talika*. We ascended the pass on horseback, and I remember seeing there in the snow the frozen corpse of a negro soldier, one of the Egyptian contingent sent by the Khedive to help his Suzerain. The pontoon bridge over the Danube had been taken away because of the ice running in the river, so we crossed in a Government steam-launch, and hired a carriage to take us to Jourjevo, where the railway began.

We stopped at the Red Cross station of Atrnatz, where three Russian Red Cross nurses had dressed thousands of wounded on their journey to Bucharest. One of these heroic women had just died of typhus, another was sick, and only one was left on duty. She gave us food and bandaged my shoulder perfectly. At last, just before midnight, I entered a railway carriage, the first sign of civilization I had seen for five months. And it was not long before I had the pleasure of sleeping in the fine Hôtel du Boulevard at Bucharest, in a real bed, with sheets, pillows, and blankets, after a real supper, properly served.

On the next morning I went to the Chief of the Red Cross Bureau in Bucharest, who happened to be a friend of my father, to ask for a *laissez-passer* on the military trains, which could take me to Minsk, where my father was Governor. Haussmann, having learned that his sister had already been sent on to Russia, followed her there. He and I had travelled from Philippopolis to the Russian frontier without stopping anywhere for more than one night, thus beating the couriers' record.

On arriving at my father's house I had nothing of my original outfit save my sword, which I had taken from our Bogdanovka armoury. I was wearing a new sheepskin coat

I had obtained in Philippopolis and my N.C.O.'s cloak with the bullet-holes in it. I had also some clean linen, a welcome gift from Michael de Giers, who had visited me in Philippopolis when his regiment was passing through. On entering the fine Governor's Mansion I took off my cloak, and was sitting talking with my father and stepmother in their drawing-room, when my father asked me: "Do you feel cold, that you haven't taken off your sheepskin coat?" Only then did I remember that warm rooms existed in the world, not having been in any for so long. On the following day the Red Cross surgeon came to dress my wound, and my father told one of the Cossacks on duty to hold the basin of warm water which Dr. Sventitsky needed. My wound was in a satisfactory condition, but much blood and matter was still being discharged. At this sight the poor Cossack fainted, dropping the basin of water on the floor. By that time it was clear that the upper part of my collar-bone had been shot away. Its sharp point hurt me a good deal, and that bit of bone had to be extracted some months later.

After having rested for a week or so at my father's house, I proceeded to St. Petersburg to report to the regiment and the Foreign Office, and to consult a first-class operating surgeon, Professor Bogdanovsky. I was somewhat astonished, almost offended, that he should see in me only an interesting surgical case. He told me that I could not have been wounded like this if one had tried to do so on purpose. It seems that the bullet had passed within a hairbreadth of an artery, half an inch from my shoulder-joint, and about as near as that to my spine, without doing me any vital injury. For about twenty years, however, I felt considerable pain from my neck to my finger-tips whenever I happened to enter a cold room.

I was promoted to be a sub-lieutenant of my regiment in February 1878, without examinations, "for distinguished

services against the Turks", and with twenty other wounded officers I was received, soon after my arrival in St. Petersburg, by Emperor Alexander II in the Winter Palace. His Majesty looked still thinner and weaker than he had in Bulgaria. He had tears in his eyes as he looked at this group of young men who had shed their blood to serve him. He shook each of us by the hand, inquiring about the circumstances under which we had been wounded. He said to us before retiring: "I hope there will be no more war." We all hoped the same also.

As my wound incapacitated me for active service with my regiment for some time to come, Prince Gortchakoff obtained for me in April the Emperor's permission to work again in the Chancery, which I did until I was transferred there definitely in January 1879. This gave me an insight into the external and internal situation of Russia up to the Tzar's assassination in 1881, an event which stood in direct connection with the fact that the Russians did not take Constantinople in January 1878. To the reasons for that failure I therefore devote a brief chapter.

## CHAPTER XII

### WHY RUSSIA DID NOT TAKE CONSTANTINOPLE IN 1878

To-day, half a century after the event, this vexed question can find a frank and truthful answer. Like most historical occurrences, this too was due, not to a single cause, but to a number of coincidental causes. The first and fundamental cause was that the war of 1877-8 was on Russia's part a war of liberation, not a war of conquest. It was undertaken to free the Christians of Turkey in Europe, not to destroy Turkey. On the contrary, ever since the first Russo-Turkish alliance of 1798 against France, the permanent aim of Russian policy was to maintain with Turkey the relations of a friendly neighbour, and even to defend her with our army and fleet against her enemies.<sup>1</sup>

This happened at the time of Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, when the combined forces of Russians and Turks drove the French from the Ionian Islands, which were then placed under the joint sovereignty of the Tzar and the Sultan. Again, in 1832, when the Pasha of Egypt, encouraged by France, successfully attacked the Sultan and was nearing Constantinople, Emperor Nicholas I sent a Russian army corps to the Bosphorus, and concluded with the Sultan the treaty of alliance of 1833, opening the Straits once more exclusively to Russian men-of-war, for the better protection of Turkey. And at the beginning of the Crimean War he declared that if Turkey were to be disrupted, Constantinople

<sup>1</sup> In 1799 Suvaroff made his celebrated campaign against the French through Italy and Switzerland. Rome was occupied by a Russian garrison after being freed from the French invaders. When I was Minister-Resident at the Papal Court, I found in the Italian archives the original proclamation of the Russian troops of occupation, announcing to the Romans the expulsion of the French and exhorting the people to pursue their avocations in peace.

would belong "to all, i.e. to no one", and consequently not to Russia.

Before starting the war of 1877-8, Alexander II likewise declared to the British Ambassador, Lord Loftus, that "he had not the slightest desire, nor the slightest intention, of seizing Constantinople", and that "the acquisition of Constantinople would be a misfortune for Russia".<sup>1</sup> This "open-door" policy perfectly reflected the secret stipulations of the Reichstadt agreement between Russia and Austria-Hungary, according to which, as we have seen, Constantinople was to become eventually a "free city". I must admit, however, that the temptation to disregard these resolves and promises became very great when in January 1878 no more Turkish troops remained between our army and Constantinople. The Chancellor, Prince Gortchakoff, even issued a circular telegram on January 29/10 February, 1878, announcing that, since a British fleet had appeared before Constantinople in order to protect the lives and security of British subjects, and other Powers had adopted similar measures on behalf of their nationals, the Russian Government was obliged under these circumstances to take the necessary steps to protect the Christians whose lives and property would be endangered, and in order to attain this result "to have in view the entrance of a part of our troops into Constantinople".

By the time this decision might have been taken, it was already too late. The vanguard of our troops, led by Skobelev, could have occupied Constantinople only within the first few days of their arrival before its walls, and, even if they had, they could hardly have maintained possession of the city. For it was well known at our G.H.Q., where the armistice with Turkey was signed on January 19th/31st, that our troops were tired out by the terrible effort of

<sup>1</sup> See the dispatch of Lord Loftus to his Government of November 2, 1876.

crossing the Balkans, and that our artillery had only an insufficient number of shells and could obtain no more ammunition from the rear for a couple of weeks. For example, in my own platoon we had in the beginning of January only eighteen sabres left out of thirty-two. In the meantime the Turks also had succeeded in concentrating some troops and throwing up some earthworks before Constantinople.

I happen to know that the Minister of War, the eminent liberal General Miliutin, took upon himself the responsibility for Russia's not occupying Constantinople, but that he did this to shield the Commander-in-Chief at the seat of war. I know of this from the Minister's nephew, Youry N. Miliutin, who had read his uncle's memoirs, which, as far as I am aware, have never been published. And I remember well that I, for one, was quite worn out by the last weeks of our advance in midwinter, without bread, sugar, or even salt, and kept up my strength only by repeating to myself, "St. George's Cross and a commission!" I am afraid that many of us were on the verge of a breakdown.

But however unfavourable our military prospects may then have been, our political situation was still worse. Russia, in the beginning of 1878, was completely isolated, and saw herself confronted by a European coalition headed by Great Britain and Austria-Hungary and secretly supported by Bismarck. Nor could Russia have undertaken a European war, with her Guard and a considerable part of her army south of the Balkans, with no fleet on the Black Sea, and, as I happen to know, with not more than thirteen batteries of artillery concentrated in Mejiboujie on the Austrian frontier in view of such a possible European conflict. Our finances also were in those days entirely in the hands of Berlin bankers, from whom, under Bismarck's influence, we had nothing to hope. These reasons were so

cogent that Russia saw herself obliged, not only to abstain from occupying Constantinople, but even from defending against European pressure at the Congress of Berlin her preliminary treaty of San Stefano with Turkey, signed on February 19/3 March, 1878.

We are ready to turn now to the disastrous consequences, for the Tzar Liberator and for his country, of this deplorable situation of Russia at the close of a victorious war.



*P A R T   I V*

*THE ASSASSINATION OF EMPEROR ALEXANDER II*



## CHAPTER XIII

### WHAT I SAW OF THE TRAGEDY OF MARCH 1/13, 1881, AND WHAT IT LED TO

In 1878 Russia had won her war, but, being unable to harvest the fruits of her victory, its effect upon the prestige of the Imperial Government was almost as bad as a defeat. I well remember the frequent comminatory notes addressed to our Foreign Office by Lord Beaconsfield, and the meek tenor of our replies. It took Prince Gortchakoff's successor, Nicholas Carlovitch de Giers, more than ten years of patient and tactful effort, under the resolute guidance of the Tzar Liberator's successor, Alexander III, to reinstate Russia in her former position of power and dignity. As to the inner situation of the Empire, the loss of prestige was not compensated by the liberal concessions which were expected by both opposition groups of the Russian *intelligentsia*. Thus when the Russian revolutionaries concentrated their efforts on trying to kill the Emperor, the *intelligentsia* looked on, unsympathetic and unmoved, like spectators of a gladiatorial fight, at the ensuing duel between the police and the terrorists.

The revolutionists had adopted a system of terrorism after having failed in their attempts to rouse the serfs against the Government. Our peasants had more than once seized and delivered to the authorities young men and women who at that time were known as "Nihilists". The revolutionary doctrines they preached to the peasants were not understood by these because of the deep cleavage which still existed between the peasants and their former masters. Under these circumstances the murder of high officials and of the Tzar himself appeared the only way to impress and arouse the masses.

March 1/13, 1881, was a Sunday. Alexander II liked

military display, and every Sunday, at noon, held in person a review in the great Michailovsky riding-school in St. Petersburg, at which all the regiments of the Guard, the Cadet Corps, etc., were represented. Knowing this custom, the terrorist faction, which had secretly gained a permanent foothold in the capital, decided on trapping the Emperor on his way home from the riding-school to the Winter Palace. Under one of the streets along this route a mine was sunk, from an adjacent shop, which alone was enough to destroy, not only the Emperor, but also the buildings on both sides of the street. In other directions the conspirators were posted with bombs. The Tzar could not possibly escape, and on that day the revolutionaries' plots succeeded.

When the Emperor's carriage, escorted by Cossacks of the Guard, passed along the narrow quay leading directly to the Winter Palace, a bomb was thrown but missed the carriage. Some of the Cossacks were injured, and the kind-hearted Tzar stopped his carriage and stepped out to help the wounded. Then another bomb was thrown at his very feet. Both legs were shattered. And when the Chief of Police brought the Tzar in an open sleigh to the Palace, he had already fainted from loss of blood and even his eminent physician, Dr. Botkin, could not save him.

That afternoon I was paying a visit to the mother of that Prince Yousoupoff whose charming daughter became the mother of the young Prince Yousoupoff who killed Rasputin. At about half-past two o'clock an officer of the General Staff came to their house and informed us that a serious attempt had been made on the Tzar's life. I hastened at once to the Foreign Office, which stands just opposite the Winter Palace. I saw a crowd gathering before the latter building and the Emperor's flag at half-mast. A few minutes later de Giers, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, came over from the Palace and told the assembled Secretaries that Alexander II had just died, that his successor,

Alexander III, was in the Palace, and that he had already given him the necessary administrative orders.

First of all our embassies and legations had to be informed of the Emperor's death and his son's accession. Moreover, the new Emperor's foreign policy was to be pointed out in such a way as to endanger neither Russia's interests nor the peace of Europe. This was not easy, because since the Congress of Berlin our relations with Great Britain and Austria-Hungary had been very strained, those with Germany were on the verge of enmity, whilst France and Italy were at that time of little practical account. The United States of America was invariably friendly, since Russia had refused to join Great Britain and France in a diplomatic intervention during the American Civil War, and had even sent a squadron of Russian battleships to New York as a demonstration against this attempt at foreign intervention. Baron Jomini, who continued as First Councillor after Prince Gortchakoff's retirement, prepared in about ten minutes the uncoded circular political telegram, which de Giers thereupon approved. We immediately sent it off, and the Press of the world printed it the next day. Thus was taken the first tactful and prudent step in that foreign policy which was to be followed during the whole peaceful reign of Alexander III, through all the complications and dangers by which Russia was then beset.

Being at that time Second Secretary of the Chancery and a Gentleman-in-Waiting of the Imperial Court, I took advantage of a short breathing-spell to visit the place where the Tzar Liberator had been attacked. It was not five minutes' walk from the Foreign Office. All along the quay of the Catherine Canal, paved with cobble-stones, the snow still lay deep on that March day. This was trampled over by horses and pedestrians and mixed with blood. On the spot where the Emperor fell a memorial church was erected some years later, and those cobble-stones of the pavement

were enclosed within a railing in that church. All the window-panes of the neighbouring houses and all the street lamps had been shattered by the strength of the explosion. There was nobody on the quay, but a dense and deeply moved crowd was assembled before the Palace. After night-fall trouble was expected and strong Cossack detachments patrolled the streets of St. Petersburg. No disturbances, however, took place. The former serfs were still impervious to the agitation of the revolutionaries.

On the following day, according to custom, Alexander III held in the Winter Palace a brilliant and solemn reception celebrating his accession to the Throne. My Court duties brought me there, and I was much impressed by the contrast of this brilliant ceremony with the deep mourning which was decreed for a year, to begin the very next day. The interment of the body of Alexander II, however, did not take place till ten days later, so as to allow foreign Courts and Governments to send their representatives to St. Petersburg. The dead Tzar lay in state in the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul, where, day and night, a guard of honour was posted. This was removed only from 10 to 11 a.m., when Alexander II's morganatic widow, Princess Ourievsy, was admitted alone to the bier. I happened to meet this lady while she was passing through one of the rooms of the Winter Palace, before her husband's body had been transferred to the Cathedral. She was tall, beautiful, and graceful; and I have never seen an expression of deeper grief than on her prematurely ageing features encircled by the deepest mourning.

My turn to mount guard came some days later from 4 to 6 a.m. The vast Cathedral was lighted only by the wax tapers and small oil-lamps before the Ikons and the bier. Only the upper part of the Emperor's body was to be seen. As his legs had been shattered, they were covered with a pall of cloth-of-gold. On his face marks of the explo-

sion were visible. His hands were crossed on his chest and, according to the Greek Orthodox custom, he wore no decorations. The expression of his bloodless and drawn face was peaceful. And, looking at him, stood the highest dignitaries of his State and Court, motionless, in full military or Court dress and deep mourning, while a priest chanted the Psalms.

At 5 a.m. the doors of the Cathedral were opened to the public, and thousands passed by, one by one, making the sign of the cross and bowing before the remains of the Tzar Liberator. Men and women were there, old and young, mostly of the peasant class. All were visibly impressed and deeply moved. An old peasant woman who had evidently been a serf, after rising from beside the open coffin, looked at us and asked us in a loud voice, "What have you done to him?" Alas! no one could answer her. We felt that this *vox populi* was right in reproaching those in power with not having protected the Tzar and, as I have said, having left their task to the police alone.

This reproach was all the more bitter because, had Alexander II lived even a fortnight longer, his liberal reign would have culminated in the granting of a Constitution to his subjects—a resolve to which he had come just before leaving the Winter Palace to meet his death. That Constitution was but a constitution in embryo. It provided for the institution of a General Commission, composed of representatives of the *Zemstvo*, partly elected and partly nominated by the Government, to help the Council of State in its legislative labours, and to bring these into practical accord with the needs of the country, which were better known to these representatives than to the St. Petersburg bureaucracy. This plan had been worked out by Count Loris-Melikoff, who had distinguished himself during the Russo-Turkish War in the Caucasus, and had risen in the anarchical days that followed to the position of the

Emperor's confidant and the virtual dictator of Russia. On that morning the Tzar had signed an order to make this plan public and to set about its realization.

Alexander III seemed at first disposed to put this plan or some other one like it into effect. I remember how General Baranoff, one of the Emperor's *protégés*, ordered the election of a Grand Council in St. Petersburg, for which I had the right to vote and to which my neighbours and I elected one representative. Its duty was to give the Central Government the kind of assistance contemplated by Loris-Melikoff. At the same time General Count Ignatief, our former Ambassador in Constantinople, who had come to live in St. Petersburg and hoped to become Minister for Foreign Affairs, was busy with a plan of convoking the old Russian States-General (*Zemsky Sobor*). Thus, in one way or the other, Russia might have entered in 1881 upon a life of peaceful parliamentary discussion of those pressing internal problems with which our bureaucracy had proved itself unable to grapple.

Alas! this was not to be. Professor Pobedonostzeff, who had been Alexander's teacher of Law, had succeeded in impressing on him the idea that before any liberties could be granted to the Russian people internal order and peace must first be established. Since Alexander III as Emperor held immovably to this conviction, which he had already reached before his accession, his whole reign was absorbed by the task of re-establishing peace and order. No room was left for liberal reforms. His successor also, Nicholas II, chose to follow this example rather than that of his grandfather, the Tzar Liberator, until it was too late. The day for reform had passed; the day of revolution had come.

*P A R T V*

*THE AWAKENING OF CENTRAL ASIA*



## CHAPTER XIV

### CENTRAL ASIAN POLITICS AT THE CORONATION OF ALEXANDER III

Sometimes History does repeat itself. Russia, after her defeats in the Crimean War, found herself deprived of her protectorate over the Christians of the Near East, thrust away from the Danube, crippled on the Black Sea, and isolated in Europe. So she turned to Asia, and for a time concentrated her political, cultural, and economic energies on the Middle and Far East. In this way she reached her natural frontiers on the Pacific and in Manchuria, organized her overland trade with China, and in Turkestan joined her Siberian possessions with Orenburg. Russia again, after her victories in the War of Liberation, found herself weakened in financial and military power, enmeshed in hostile Near Eastern intrigues, and isolated in the face of a European Coalition. So, once more, she turned her attention for a time to Asia, the central part of which was in a mediaeval condition of apathy and anarchy, but was beginning slowly to awake under the civilizing influence of Russia's policy of "peace and plenty".

Besides, the British Government, led by Lord Beaconsfield, had recently given Russia some useful hints and set her an example. Carrying out his system of "bluff", Beaconsfield had brought Indian troops to Malta in support of the British fleet anchored in the Straits before Constantinople; and his "spirited forward policy", popularized by General Rawlinson, openly aimed at establishing for India a "scientific frontier" opposed to Russia in Central Asia. This policy was so clearly one of menace that—as I am now at liberty to tell—the Russian Governor-General of Turkestan began thinking about erecting fortifications around Samarkand. In this way Lord Beaconsfield pointed to a connection

between Central Asian and Near Eastern politics, and so disclosed, not only his ambitions, but also his fears. The Afghan frontier, whither the shells of the British fleet could not reach, and where nevertheless the "Indian Empire" established by Beaconsfield's initiative had to be defended, was evidently the weak point of the system. If a duel were to be fought between the "Russian bear" and the "British whale"—an idea which delighted Bismarck—Central Asia would be the place where the two must join issue, obviously to the advantage of Russia.

Shortly before the death of Emperor Alexander II an important event had occurred in Central Asia. General Skobeleff, on January 10/22, 1881, took by storm the central Turkoman fortress of Gueoktepe, and annexed the whole territory of the Ahal-Teke tribe to Russia. This expedition into the distant and then practically unknown Trans-Caspian region had become inevitable. The Turkomans of Ahal-Teke and their cousins of Merv had been for almost a century the worst freebooters of Central Asia. They plundered at will the neighbouring Persian province of Khorasan, and, being virtually independent, made regular trade impossible in that part of the Trans-Caspian country. The only exception was the trade in slaves. Captured Persians, men, women, and children, were sold by them to the settled inhabitants of the neighbouring Khanates of Khiva, Bokhara, and Afghanistan; and when in 1880 a Russian expedition was sent out from Krasnovodsk, our first military post on the eastern side of the Caspian Sea, for the purpose of curbing the Ahal-Teke, they succeeded in repulsing the Russian troops. Naturally brave, inured to fighting, and protected by a hundred miles of sandy and waterless desert, they were able to inflict a considerable loss upon the expedition.

But General Skobeleff's victory at the beginning of the next year was complete, and the territory he had conquered

was at once erected into a Russian military province, called the Trans-Caspian, with the Turkoman village of Askhabad for its capital. The Teke Turkomans of Merv remained outside these limits and independent, and the question of what was to become of them formed the subject of prolonged and fervid discussion in the British Press. A British newspaper correspondent named O'Donovan succeeded in penetrating into Merv and spending about a year there (because he could not get out of it again), precisely during Skobelev's campaign. He wrote two excellent and truthful volumes about Merv, noting the wish of some of the local leaders for British help and protection against the Russians and the anarchical state of the whole land. Nevertheless, Beaconsfield's friends continued to speak of Merv as "the Queen of the World" and "the key to India", and thus brought on what the Duke of Argyll in 1882 humorously called a fit of "Mervousness".

I must say that if in London people did not know what was to become of Merv, the same was the case in St. Petersburg; and in the Chancery of the Foreign Office we were very anxious about what turn this question of Merv might take. In the meantime, the able Military Governor of the Trans-Caspian Province, General Alexander V. Komaroff, had taken this question in hand, trying to find a peaceful solution for it. One of the first clever things he did was to obtain for a group of representative Merv-Teke Turkomans an invitation to be present, as friendly neighbours, at the coronation of Emperor Alexander III in Moscow in May 1883.

When this deputation returned to Merv, they spread far and wide glowing reports of the marvels they had seen. They had crossed the sea in a boat propelled by steam in less than a day, and then had travelled for days and days, driven by a steam-engine along iron rails, through an uninterrupted fruitfully and well-watered land. In Moscow,

the great capital, they were most hospitably received, and saw, in the middle of the city, a fortress with high walls and many towers. On the evening of the coronation the Russians placed in each of these towers a full moon (the recently invented Yablochkoff incandescent electric light). And at an ensuing review they counted 60,000 excellent troops; but, they added, these troops belonged only to one brother (they were commanded by the Grand Duke Vladimir), and the other brother (the Emperor) had as many more. These impressions, added to the terrible memories of their Gueoktepe defeat, prepared the ground very effectively for Komaroff's further negotiations in Merv, of which I was soon to witness the result.

Another very important item of Central Asian politics was treated with equal ability in Moscow during the coronation. It concerned the Khanate of Bokhara. The reigning Amir, Said Muzaffar Eddin, who had fought against Russia and been beaten, had in 1867 concluded a treaty of "friendship and peace" with the Governor-General of Turkestan, von Kauffmann, which deprived him of the city and province of Samarkand, but left him politically independent. He was growing old and had many sons, who, according to inveterate custom, would begin upon his death to fight one another until only one survived to reign, whilst the people of Bokhara would have to pay the piper.

This was in direct contradiction to Russia's policy of "peace and plenty" for Asia, and the Imperial Government made up its mind to use its moral ascendancy to the full in order to prevent it. Accordingly, von Kauffmann's successor, General Tcherniaeff, whom Alexander III had just appointed Governor-General of Turkestan, persuaded the Amir, through a special embassy, to send as his representative to the Emperor's coronation that one of his sons whom he considered best fitted to reign after him. This was his fourth son, Said Abdul Ahad, who, on reaching

Moscow, received from the hands of the Tzar himself a sword of investiture, recognizing him as his father's heir apparent. Soon thereafter it became my lot to help this man to the throne, and to witness the first years of his reign as the "Reformer".

My duties as Gentleman-in-Waiting of the Imperial Court, which I owed to the kind offices of de Giers, called me to Moscow before the coronation. The city was naturally over-crowded by the Russian and foreign dignitaries and representatives who were assembling there for the great event, and who had to be treated strictly in accordance with an international table of precedence. This table, concerning all foreign princes, embassies, and deputations, I had been entrusted by my chief, Count Lamsdorf, to draw up. It took me a couple of weeks of intensive and meticulous historical and heraldic research, but it proved so successful that not a hitch occurred, and de Giers complimented Count Lamsdorf (not me!) on the result. My former chief, Baron Buhler, and his wife were so kind as to invite me to stay with them during the coronation. They had also invited Ivan A. Zinovieff, the new Chief of the Asiatic Department, who had just spent several years as Russian Minister at Teheran, and whom I had not yet met. It was the desire of Baroness Buhler that we two should see a good deal of each other, and we had several long and interesting talks, at the end of which M. Zinovieff, noting the interest I took in Central Asia and the pains at which I had been to study various aspects of the Asian question, offered me my choice of the post of First Secretary in Teheran or that of Diplomatic Secretary to the Governor-General of Turkestan. I was glad to leave St. Petersburg after eight years of study and observation there, and to begin at last an active diplomatic career. I chose Turkestan, because I could go there by the roundabout but most interesting route of unconquered Merv and mediaeval Bokhara.

I need not speak here of the unique magnificence of Alexander III's coronation, which was marred by no such untoward incident as that of his successor, but I must mention how deeply foreigners were impressed by the following scene. The Emperor entered Moscow from the Petrovsky Palace on horseback, and passed, at a walk, through five miles of the most populous streets of the capital to the Kremlin, where for two anxious hours we were awaiting him, not knowing, in spite of all possible measures of precaution, whether he would reach his destination alive. But the Russians crowding the streets took off their hats and made the sign of the Cross as the Emperor advanced past them, offering thanks to God that they saw him still safe—so deep was the impression of the recent assassination of his father. The foreign spectators were able to gather from this scene how truly the Russian people still loved and venerated their sovereign. On the evening of the coronation M. Zinovieff took me in his carriage to look at the wonderful illuminations, in which electricity was for the first time used on a lavish scale. I then saw in each of the towers of the Kremlin those Yablochkoff "full moons" which the Turkomans of Merv had observed with wonder. Among the young princes from the West who were present was Alexander Battenberg of Bulgaria, and also an Austrian Hussar, Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, whom thirteen years later I was to present with his official recognition, by the Imperial Russian Government, as legitimate Prince of Bulgaria.

On returning to St. Petersburg I resumed, but only for three months, my duties as First Secretary of the Chancery. For in October 1883 I obtained my appointment as Diplomatic Secretary to General Tcherniaeff, the Governor-General of Turkestan. I soon left for Kursk, where my father was residing since his retirement from active service, and where for the first time I displayed, with the help of

my faithful Shchesiouk, who accompanied me on this expedition, my very full but handy camping-outfit. I found my father looking very poorly on account of his intestinal trouble, but I never thought that this was to be our last meeting.

From Kursk I travelled on across the Caucasus, visited one married sister of mine in Novorossisk and another in Tiflis, and, taking ship at Baku, continued by sea my journey towards the Trans-Caspian Province. On the way our boat touched at some Persian ports on the Caspian Sea. I disembarked at Krasnovodsk on January 1/13, 1884. At that time this was only a small frontier post of the newly established province. It was garrisoned by one battalion of the Trans-Caspian Rifles, and had but a few houses besides the barracks. There was a small well of brackish water, round which a few shrubs were carefully planted. The only potable water obtainable was distilled from the highly impregnated sea water, yet it was quite pleasant to the taste. Within a few years Krasnovodsk had become the terminus of the Russian Central Asian Railway, which now links up the Caspian Sea, via Askhabad, Merv, Bokhara, and Tashkent, with the European Russian railway system at Orenburg—a distance of about three thousand miles.

## CHAPTER XV

## UNDER TURKOMAN FIRE IN MERV

To travel from Krasnovodsk to Askhabad in 1884 was not easy. First one had to go about a hundred and fifty miles by sea to reach the narrow, sandy island of Ouzoun-Ada in Mikhailovsky Bay, on which not a shrub, not a drop of fresh water, was to be found, but which possessed a good roadstead for shipping. Here began the Trans-Caspian Railway, then built only across a hundred miles of desert and sand-dunes as far as the first oasis of the Ahal-Teke Turkomans in Kizil Arvat. I had seen sand-dunes near Suez, but these were far larger and higher. The rocks between which the dunes were scattered were worn into fantastic shapes by wind, sand, and rain, and about sunset I saw for the first time a mirage: water and trees on the horizon that seemed perfectly real. By nightfall we reached Kizil Arvat, and I learned there from the military station-master that General Komaroff had sent thither a *tarantass* (springless travelling-carriage) for my use. In this vehicle, drawn by horses belonging to the local battalions, I was to travel the remaining one hundred and eighty miles to Askhabad over a rough road, which wound its way between the Kara Kum Desert and the Kopet Dagh Mountain range which formed the Persian frontier.

General Komaroff met me most hospitably and kindly in the one-storied brick house which had just been built for himself and his family. I lived in a small house belonging to the civil engineer, Paul M. Lessar, of whom I shall have much to say. He had been helping General Annenkov to build the railway across the first stretch of desert, and was scientifically surveying the country. I received from General Komaroff the offer of his best assistance on my further journey. He told me that within a few days he was expect-

ing in Askhabad a deputation consisting of four Turkoman tribal chieftains of Merv, who were going to offer the Tzar their entire submission. Then he would himself visit Merv, and he invited me to accompany him thither. We were to meet at the frontier river, the Tedjend, on February 26th. From Merv he could then easily have me conducted across the remaining desert to the boundary of Bokhara on the Amu Daria River. These offers I accepted thankfully. I stayed at Askhabad a couple of weeks longer, during which I witnessed the arrival of the deputies from Merv and caught a bout of malaria, and then left for our trysting-place via the Persian frontier town of Kutchan.

As the nearest way to Kutchan led over the Gaudan Pass, which had not yet been crossed by any European, I chose it, so as to be able to compare it with that of Davand, which Lessar had already surveyed and found unsatisfactory. The Persian frontier is only a few miles from Askhabad. Then follows a very steep climb through the snow, which, however, we were able to make on horseback. The pass took me two days to cross, and the rough barometric survey I made of it showed its summit to be 7,200 feet high—just the elevation of the pass over the Caucasus between Vladikavkaz and Tiflis. Its approaches were neither steep nor difficult, and a good while afterwards the carriage road between the Trans-Caspian Province and Khorasan was built across this very pass. During the Great War regular communication by motor-car was maintained by the British Military Authorities over this road, between the terminus of the Indian railway in Beluchistan and the Russian railway at Askhabad.

Kutchan was buried in deep snow. Komaroff had given me two Cossacks as an honorary escort, and my little caravan consisted, besides these, of Shchesiouk, a Caucasian interpreter named Begliaroff, and a pack-horse carrying my outfit. I stopped overnight in the house of the Russian

commercial agent, Tairoff, and, following his advice, sent next morning to the hereditary Governor of Kutchan my compliments and a bottle of good brandy, for which he had a great liking. After continuing my journey for a time through the valley of Khorasan, I crossed back again into the Trans-Caspian Province over the above-mentioned Davand Pass. The foot of it was so deeply covered with snow that I had to hire all the inhabitants of the neighbouring village to cut a trench for my horses through the snow. The ascent, too, proved far steeper and less accessible than that of the Gaudan Pass.

On the appointed day I reached General Komaroff's camp at Karibend on the Tedjend River, far beyond which lay Merv, and pitched my tent next to that of the General. I became his guest for the rest of our expedition, and he talked to me freely and fully of all that was going on. The news from Merv was good. Colonel Alikhanoff, a distinguished Mohammedan officer from the Caucasus who had negotiated the peaceful submission of Merv, was still there and reported that all was well. This news arrived, however, after the four tribal chiefs, with about two hundred headmen, had already put in their appearance on the Tedjend in order to accompany the General to Merv. The Russian force which was to march with us consisted of only four platoons of infantry, two squadrons of Cossacks—in all less than a thousand men—with two mountain guns of an obsolete type. We had to cross a waterless desert of eighty miles, but the requisite number of camels for carrying water had arrived. So General Komaroff issued marching orders for the next morning at 9 o'clock.

After having dined with the General in his felt tent and played a rubber of Russian bridge with him, I had just retired to my tent and was putting on the Siberian reindeer coat in which I slept when the General's orderly came to ask me to return to him. As soon as I came in Komaroff



GENERAL A. V. KOMAROFF AND SOME OF HIS OFFICERS



handed me a dispatch he had just received from Alikhanoff. In it I read that after the departure of the friendly chiefs, Kadjar Khan, their political opponent and a partisan of England—of whom O'Donovan has much to say—had raised in Merv an anti-Russian revolt, incited thereto by a mysterious Afghan religious propagandist, Siah Push, and was starting with 5,000 horsemen to meet and oppose Komaroff before he could reach Merv.

What were we to do? As the Merv-Teke tribe numbered about 400,000, our small detachment was far too insignificant to attempt their conquest. But our strength lay, not in numbers, but in prestige. We were sure that the great majority of the Merv Turkomans wished for peace and security, and were well aware that, even if they destroyed our detachment, another and stronger one would be sent to punish and subdue them. So it had happened to their Ahal-Teke kinsmen, when Skobeleff by his terrible victory at Gueoktepe avenged the earlier Russian defeat. That was but three years before and was still fresh in their memories. The Turkomans themselves told us later, "We were not afraid of you, but of your tail." So after an hour's calm discussion General Komaroff decided that his previous orders were to be maintained, that his advance would take place as boldly as it had been planned.

The next morning at nine, accordingly, the detachment began its march in fighting trim and ready for any emergency. Our Turkoman friends rode parallel to us, but just out of sight. They kept the General informed of all that the enemy was doing or planning to do, but were evidently holding themselves free to join the winning side. Komaroff saw through their game perfectly, but showed them entire confidence, and encouraged them to keep in touch with him. About 2 p.m. we reached a big pool of rain water, where we were to camp for the night. The men were ordered to form a square about the water, and, as we had not enough

infantry, the fourth side of the square had to be made up by the Cossacks. Soon Alikhanoff rode into this camp with a couple of friendly Turkomans, and was able to give the General verbally the details of what had happened. His outlook was pessimistic. Under its influence some of us thought it would be better for Komaroff not to advance to the citadel of Merv, but to seize the Kushut dam on the Murghab River and thus gain control of the whole irrigation system of the oasis.

But Komaroff knew better. His strength lay neither in our fire nor in their water, but in Russian prestige, which would have been lost by the slightest symptom of doubt or indecision. So his plan remained unchanged, and when the friendly chiefs let him know that Kadjar Khan was approaching and would attack our detachment at night-fall, he sent out to meet him only the Ahal-Teke military contingent, of which we had one platoon. This was then under the command of Captain Kalitin, whom I was to meet forty years later as a distinguished Russian General among the "White" immigrants in Constantinople. Komaroff ordered him to reconnoitre the approaching enemy and to report his observations.

About sunset we heard firing in the distance, some shots being exchanged between our militiamen and Kadjar Khan's forces. When the latter saw that the water-hole was already in our hands, knowing that there was no other water available for them, they turned back to Merv without attempting an attack. Our militiamen brought us back a prisoner, a young Merv horseman, armed with sword and rifle, whose horse had carried him into the Russian ranks.

On the next day our march was continued as had been decided beforehand. General Komaroff was highly pleased when we met some Turkoman shepherds driving their flocks of sheep towards us and the rich pastures which lay behind us, but which none hitherto had dared to make

use of because of continual Turkoman depredations. Komaroff saw in this fact an expression of the confidence already inspired by the Russian advance. He ordered some sheep to be bought for the detachment, at a good price, which was handed to the shepherds on the spot. By night-fall we reached the first irrigation canals of Merv, and the only difficult part of our march had thus come successfully to an end, without our even having had to make use of our rifles or of the water carried by our camels.

Komaroff here ordered a day's rest, during which the neighbouring Turkoman population trooped of their own accord into our camp, bringing us abundant supplies. These supplies also the General ordered to be bought at a good price and cash down—a measure which immediately increased his and our popularity. At the same time Komaroff had frequent talks with these people, repeating to them what he had already told the shepherds we met on our way to Merv—that he had come to secure for all “peace and plenty”, and that their religion and customs would not be interfered with save for an absolute prohibition of robbery.

While I was sitting with Komaroff in his tent about noon, the arrival of the Chief Mullah of Merv was announced. On his being admitted we saw a tall, portly old man with a long grey beard, an enormous white turban, and flowing white robes, who was supported on either side by an acolyte. The General received him with great friendliness and deference, offered him tea, and began to repeat to him the same assurances concerning the religion and customs of the Turkomans, the same promises of their future prosperity under the Russian aegis. One thing only the White Tzar's Government demanded, said he—that robber-raids should cease. The Chief Mullah, who was a worthy though not very influential man (since the Turkomans were not as a rule very zealous Moslems), agreed with all the General

said, and towards the end of this conversation spoke as follows: "The Turkomans understand the great advantages accruing to them from their subjection to the White Tzar. But there are among us silly people who are unable to appreciate these advantages, and some of them even ventured out yesterday to hinder your arrival. One of these foolish men was taken prisoner by you. Would you mind setting him free?" "Because of my friendship for you I shall certainly do so", answered the General; and ordered the prisoner to be brought at once, just as he had been taken. In a few minutes the young Turkoman appeared, on horseback and with sword and rifle, and Komaroff, turning to the Mullah, said to him: "I make you a present of this man." Then the Mullah and his acolytes mounted their horses and returned to Merv with the liberated prisoner. Later some of our officers asked the General why he had left the prisoner his rifle, "for," said they, "he is sure to fire on us again on the first occasion." Komaroff answered: "I did this on purpose. One rifle, more or less, in the hands of the Turkomans can in no way change our situation. But by leaving the man his arms I showed the Turkomans that I care nothing for the whole lot of them."

On the following day we continued our march towards the central citadel of Merv, whither, like the Ahal-Teke Turkomans of Gueoktepe, they were to withdraw with their families and property in case of attack. The fortress was still about ten miles away. Before reaching our bivouac on the territory of Bogadur Khan—one of the four tribal chieftains who had signed their allegiance to the Emperor, and whom His Majesty had promoted to the rank of Major in the Russian militia—we heard artillery fire in the direction of the citadel. Some of our younger officers asked Komaroff's permission to storm and take the citadel of Merv, which I believe could have been done by them then and there. But Komaroff told them: "Ours is not a military

but a peaceful expedition, and you will see to-morrow that there will be no natives in the citadel, but we shall enter it without meeting with any resistance." He told me, from his wide acquaintance with local customs and native warfare, gained by him in the Caucasus, that these robber-tribes have no organized commissariat and cannot remain concentrated in one spot for any length of time.

In thus abstaining from storming the Merv citadel Komaroff proved, not only his tactical ability, but also his unselfish and patriotic political wisdom. Taking that citadel by storm would have assuredly meant for him the Cross of Commander of the Military Order of St. George, and for his officers corresponding decorations. But for Russia it would have meant the failure of her pacific Central Asian policy, and, quite possibly, war with England. As it was, he succeeded in annexing Merv to Russia without giving Great Britain any reason for protest. Not many military leaders would have acted as wisely and disinterestedly.

Kadjar Khan, however, had made up his mind to fight, and our friendly natives informed Komaroff that at 11 p.m. on this very night he was to be attacked. Shortly after ten o'clock a square was formed around our camp. We had just enough men—there being no water to guard this time—to form the square in double file. The men remained standing as in Napoleonic days, and were ordered to fire only in volleys, on command, sighting at 300 paces. While walking with General Komaroff inside the square, I remarked that it was lucky we had full moon, so that we could see at a considerable distance almost as clearly as by day. Komaroff answered: "I had calculated on it." At about eleven o'clock loud shouts of "Allah, Allah!" were heard to the north of our camp, and soon we saw an irregular crowd of Turkomans advancing on us, brandishing their swords and rifles and keeping up a running fire.

Their fire was not as intensive as that of the Turks at Telish, and was just as wild and badly aimed. The bullets whistled over our heads and only one of our men was mortally wounded. At 300 paces the attackers, who had to climb the irrigation ditches, were clearly visible. The colonel in command of the infantry, who was on horseback in the square, ordered the north side to open fire in volleys. The first, second, and third volleys were fired as on parade. Then all the hubbub suddenly ceased, and when Komaroff sent a troop of Cossacks to see what was going on, they returned in a few minutes and reported that the Turkomans had fled, taking their wounded with them, but leaving fourteen corpses on the field. From that day until the Great War not a shot was fired in anger in Central Asia, except against the Afghans when Komaroff repulsed their inroad at Kushk a year later.

While all this was going on, Komaroff's native interpreter, Tairoff, in whose house I had stayed in Kutchan, sat in his tent, which was next to the General's tent. All at once he saw the felt covering of his tent being lifted, and a Turkoman with a drawn sword came in. Tairoff began to scream, and when a soldier rushed in, arrested the Turkoman, and asked him what he was doing there, the man declared that he had come to kill the Russian General. The Turkomans knew that a Persian General always hid in his tent while a battle was going on, and as a candle was burning in that of Tairoff, the Turkoman, who had crept into our camp unobserved, believed the Russian commander to be there.

When this incident was reported to Komaroff he found himself faced with a delicate problem. To leave this attempt on his life unpunished was impossible; yet to execute the perpetrator would be to make a martyr of him, and perhaps make his grave a shrine for the enemies of Russia. Komaroff's profound knowledge of Asiatic customs showed

him the way out. He ordered Bogadur Khan to come to him and said: "I am your guest. This man wanted to kill me. I give him to you to deal with him as you think fit." On the following morning I saw this man's body, stripped of his clothing, with a bullet-hole in his back, lying just outside our camp. In the course of the same morning our one wounded soldier, who had died during the night, was buried unobtrusively, and we continued our march on Merv.

Bogadur Khan was ordered to have bridges, broad enough for our ammunition carts, built across the numberless irrigation ditches which we had to cross on our way to the citadel; for, since the days of Alexander the Great, no wheel had entered Merv, all transportation being by pack. Our detachment had its usual four-wheeled carts for munitions and provisions. Our antiquated artillery was mounted on wheeled carriages, and, though of no real use, could of course not be left behind. Besides, the civil engineer, Lessar, who also accompanied Komaroff, had with him the mileometer wheel which he was using for his railway survey to Merv, as he had already used it on his railway reconnoitring to Herat.

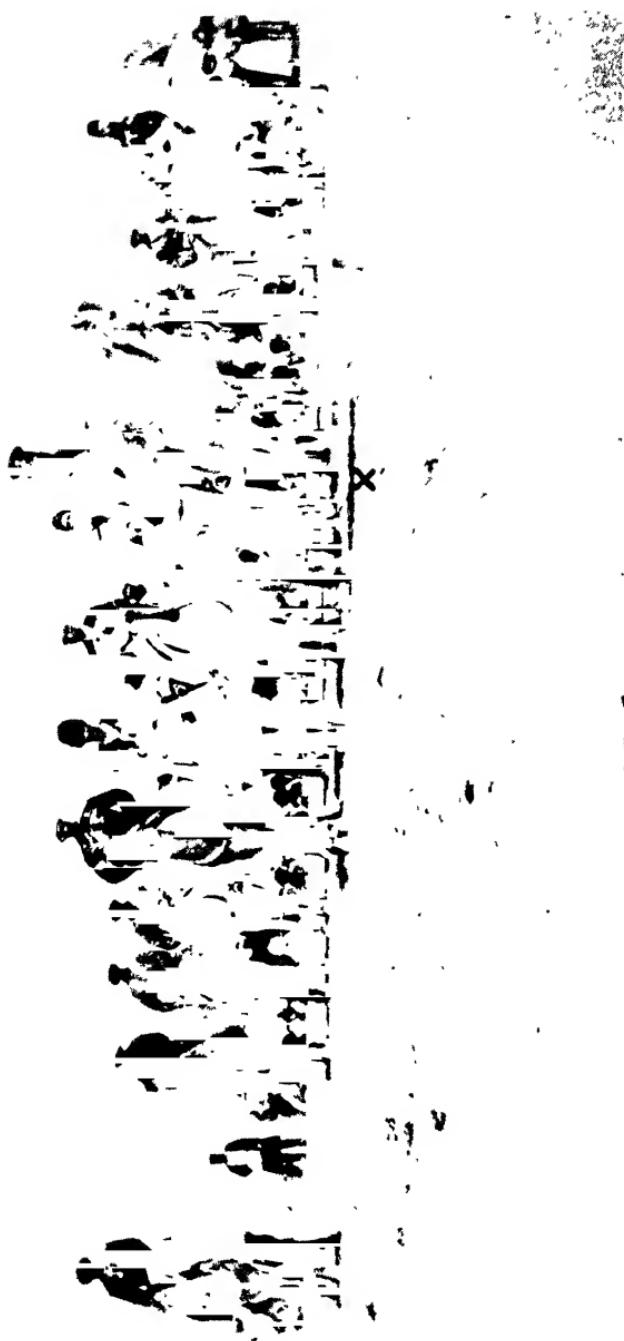
The citadel of Merv is built on the right bank of the Murghab River, which supplies the whole oasis with water, and across which was then standing a primitive and shaky wooden bridge just opposite the citadel. Komaroff ordered the detachment to camp on the hither side, but allowed me to cross and have a look at the fortress, which, as the General had predicted, was now entirely undefended. I took with me a measuring-tape, and noted that the walls were about 70 feet high and very thick. On the top, facing us, were four old Persian brass cannon, which had been hauled there by the Turkomans and had been fired in our direction, with gunpowder bought by subscription, in the hope, not of repelling, but of frightening us. The inner part of the fortress formed an oblong rectangle more than

a mile in length. Each tribe had to build one wall. But because of some tribal quarrel the southern wall remained unfinished. Inside were a few Turkoman huts with nobody in them.

It was the first day of March, the anniversary of the assassination of Emperor Alexander II. For this reason Komaroff wished the Russian occupation of Merv to take place, not on that day, but on the following day, March 2/14, 1884. Then he posted sentinels on the walls of the citadel, and in the afternoon he asked me to accompany him inside the fortress on a search for scarabs—for he was a noted specialist and collector. So, accompanied only by his batman, we spent several most interesting hours in a search such as certainly had never before been witnessed in that fort—a search which afforded Komaroff all the promise of virgin soil. His hopes were realized when, delicately lifting stones and old bricks, he found some specimens of coleoptera hitherto unknown, of a species now called after him *komaroviae*. He went about his task as calmly and freely as if he were in some interior province of Russia, and thus filled with astonishment the Turkomans who were looking on from a distance.

I am sure that Komaroff in doing this was guided, not only by his love for beetles, but also by his resolve to continue impressing the natives with that same utter self-confidence which had led him to set free our Turkoman prisoner with his sword and rifle. On a narrow space between the western wall and the river he ordered our sappers to build a small fort to hold our detachment, which became the Merv garrison. This fort was to be called "the Nikolai Fort on the Murghab", but it was never finished there being no use for it. In fact, from the Caspian to the Pacific no forts were erected, nor wanted, by the Imperial Government.

After the Turkoman defeat Kadjar Khan, Siah Pusl



COLONEL ALIKHANOFF, FIRST RUSSIAN GOVERNOR OF MERV, AND HIS ESCORT

X COLONEL ALIKHANOFF



and some of their adherents had fled towards Afghanistan, but were arrested by the friendly Turkomans and brought into Komaroff's camp. He had them imprisoned in separate tents, and asked me to conduct the inquiry about who the men were and what they had been doing. At the time when fighting was expected I had asked General Komaroff to look upon me as his subordinate officer, ready to do anything he told me. So I willingly undertook this interesting inquiry, of which I shall speak in the following chapter.

Komaroff's entire confidence in achieving the peaceful submission of Merv was demonstrated also by the tour he undertook through the oasis, escorted only by one troop of Cossacks. He spent three or four days on this tour, visiting the principal irrigation dam on the Murghab, the ruins of the Greek, Arab, and Persian cities of Merv, and the dwelling of Madame Gul Djemal, widow of the last Khan of all Merv and mother of one of the tribal chiefs. As I was asked to accompany him, I saw all these various objects of his visits. I saw the primitive Kushut dam, where some years later the Tzar's Murghab Estate was founded and flourished, along with a modern irrigation system for the whole oasis. I witnessed Komaroff's impressive visit to the old Turkoman lady, to whose patriotic perspicacity he owed a great part of the success of his expedition. He brought her splendid presents of zibeline furs, cloth-of-gold, and finest Russian jewellery. I could also examine the great mound of earth called to this day Iskander Kala, or the Fort of Alexander the Great. Komaroff, who was also a noted archaeologist and had been president of a recent archaeological congress in Tiflis, regretted having no time to undertake excavations in this mound.

One day we lunched near the tomb of Sultan Sandjar, the first to propagate Islam in Central Asia. When Komaroff, looking for beetles, lifted a stone and found under it

a live viper, a Turkoman Mullah who was present began to boast of knowing a charm against snake-bite. Komaroff dared him to seize this viper. The Mullah took it deftly with his right hand at the base of its neck, and could have simply killed it. Instead, the poor fool put the index finger of his left hand into the viper's jaws, and when it bit, pulled his finger out with a sound like that of tearing a piece of calico. Then he bit the snake in two, threw the writhing pieces on the ground, and went away mumbling some incantation. Before long a Turkoman approached Komaroff and told him that the Mullah was in a bad state, that his arm had swollen to the shoulder, and that he begged the General for some vodka, alcohol being considered in the East an antidote to snake-poison. Komaroff had none, but I had some brandy in my flask. This I poured out—I must say, grudgingly—for the Mullah. Before we left Komaroff was informed that the Mullah was getting better.

The Persian city called Bairam Ali, which we visited last, and near which there is now a Russian railway station of that name, had been captured by the Amir of Bokhara just one hundred years before. All its inhabitants had been transported to Bokhara, and the city was gradually being covered with the shifting sand of the neighbouring desert. But many mosques, public baths, and private houses were still in a tolerable state of repair. Thus ended Komaroff's peaceful conquest of Merv, and he began to prepare for his return to Askhabad. But he did not leave before seeing through the strange advanture of Kadjar Khan and his intellectual leader Siah Push, and the collapse of the Mahdist movement that was then starting in Central Asia

## CHAPTER XVI

### CENTRAL ASIAN MAHDIISM IN 1884 NIPPED IN THE BUD

A brilliant comet, visible everywhere, appeared in 1882—the first year of the fourteenth century of the Islamic era. Mohammedans all over the world expect the Mahdi, the new and final reforming Prophet of Islam, to make his appearance at the beginning of some one of the Islamic centuries. We know how this belief brought on the terrible Mahdist insurrection in the Sudan in 1884, how during this movement General Gordon lost his life while defending Khartum, how a British military expedition was driven back by the Mahdist forces, and how at last Kitchener succeeded in 1898 in quelling the insurrection. Now General Komaroff discovered, quite unexpectedly, that a similar movement had begun in Merv just before the Russian occupation of that country, and that this movement had been started by the mysterious “Black-robed One” (Siah Push) whom I have already mentioned. It will be remembered that this man, together with two of his disciples, Komaroff’s opponent Kadjar Khan, and a few other Turkoman rebels, had been arrested by our friendly Turkomans themselves and brought to our camp, where Komaroff asked me to examine them and draw up a report about them.

I began with Kadjar Khan. His case was simple. He was a typical Turkoman chieftain and robber, long, lean, fanatical, aspiring to supreme power in Merv, and had fallen entirely under the influence of Siah Push. He told me that this was “a good man”, in spite of the fact that, because of him, Kadjar Khan had been defeated, had seen his eldest son killed in an encounter with the Russian militia, had lost all his property, and was expecting to be hanged at the end of our interview.

Sending him back to his tent with his two sentries, I ordered Siah Push to be brought in. When he entered my tent, accompanied by two soldiers with fixed bayonets, I saw before me an extraordinary personage. He was clothed in threadbare black robes, but wore them with a wonderful simple dignity. He was quite calm and entirely composed, although he also believed that an imminent death sentence awaited him. Slightly above middle height, he had regular features, and wore the long, flowing hair of a Nazarene, parted in the middle, and a dark, slightly parted beard. His eyes were black, like his hair, but wonderfully lustrous and deep. His voice was marked by an extraordinary harmony and charm. It was the voice of a man born to inspire faith, to persuade, and to command. He spoke Persian, which I knew very imperfectly but sufficiently well to control the translation made by the General's able interpreter, Tairoff.

Siah Push avoided telling much about his antecedents. He admitted being Afghan by birth, and that he had been present at Maivand when Eyoub Khan defeated the British forces. Afterwards Siah Push had retired to the great mosque of Khaf in Persia, fasted and prayed there for forty days, and sallied forth to preach the renovated faith of Islam. The great comet, continued he, announced the birth of the Mahdi. "I am not the Mahdi," said he, "but I am his *Vekil* (representative) till he grows up. The earth is a field, and I am one of the sowers. If you give me time, I can teach you the true doctrine." Further, he disclaimed meddling with politics, although Komaroff had received from him one or two letters of a clearly political character. He complained that the Turkomans were a rude and unenlightened people, from whom he had had much to suffer. This was quite true, but the astonishing fact was that, after spending barely two years among them, without money and without relations, he had acquired such an unbound-

influence over Kadjar Khan and his partisans that 5,000 men had been ready to fight for him against the Russians.

Listening to him, I could not help thinking of the "Veiled Prophet", Mokannah (sung by Thomas Moore), who flourished here in Merv some centuries before. In the report I drew up for General Komaroff I expressed the opinion that Siah Push's propaganda was connected with the arrival of Eyoub Khan in Northern Persia, and was aimed at giving him the support of the Merv Turkomans in his fight for the throne of Kabul, under a fanatical belief in the near advent of the Mahdi. This belief might have spread like wildfire in Central Asia if the Turkomans had not been more robbers than fanatics. As it was, Siah Push had been patiently spinning a complicated spider's-web, which Komaroff's straightforward and peaceful advance on Merv had simply brushed away. The two disciples of Siah Push, who had followed him blindly from Khaf to Merv, were men of no importance.

On receiving my report and seeing how utterly this Mahdist attempt had been nipped in the bud, General Komaroff reported to his political chief in Tiflis, Prince Doundounoff-Korsakoff, that a policy of leniency would be most suitable to the occasion. So none of the insurgents was executed. Kadjar Khan, Siah Push, and his two disciples were peacefully interned in the town of Kaluga, south of Moscow—I suppose for the rest of their lives. In like fashion a quarter of a century earlier Shamil, the famous fanatical Moslem defender of the Caucasian Daghestan Province against the Russians, had been brought to Moscow. As his capture had ensured lasting peace to the Caucasus, so did that of Siah Push to Merv.

What a wonderful cultural change came over the Turkomans in the course of the following thirty years of Russian "peace and plenty" is made palpable in reading *On Secret Patrol in High Asia*, by L. V. S. Blacker, Captain of the

Guides (London, John Murray, 1922). Herein is described the state in which the author found the Turkomans and their neighbours of Central Asia during the Great War and the ensuing civil war between the White and Red Russians.

When I was Ambassador in Constantinople in 1910, celebrations and rejoicings took place in Merv in commemoration of the fortunate submission of the Merv-Teke Turkomans to the Tzar of Russia. On this occasion His Majesty granted various favours to these, his most recent subjects, and the people of Merv sent a deputation to St. Petersburg having a woman at its head—for the first time, I believe, in the history of feminism. This was none other than that Madame Gul Djemal to whom General Komaroff had brought from the Emperor the gifts I saw him hand her when he visited her after the annexation. The deputation included Madame Gul Djemal's stepson, Makdoum Kouli Khan, her son, Oussouf Khan, both by that time promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonels, and two younger successors of the tribal Khans of 1884 ranking as Sub-Lieutenants of the Tzar's militia. They were accompanied by three Merv-Teke notables. Gul Djemal had the privilege of addressing the Emperor through an interpreter, to express the thanks of the Merv Turkomans. She wore the pelisse of sables I have mentioned, and the circumstances of this audience testified that a quarter of a century, though it had brought her to old age, had not diminished the consideration in which she was held by the Tzar and his Government.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A RIDE THROUGH RUSSO-AFGHAN NO-MAN'S-LAND INTO THE HERAT VALLEY

In Merv one of Komaroff's Turkoman dispatch-bearers brought me two letters from my father, telling me that he was not well, and a telegram from my stepmother, informing me that he had died in Moscow on February 23rd, shortly before the occupation of Merv. My father was buried in Bogdanovka by the time the telegram reached me. However, I was obliged to return to Russia for the settlement of various matters involving my sisters and myself, and the Russian law permitted three months' leave on such an occasion. Consequently, instead of continuing my journey to Bokhara and Tashkent, I decided to return to Kursk and St. Petersburg, but not without first having a look at some unexplored roads leading from the Trans-Caspian Province to Herat, that interesting capital of the neighbouring Afghan province of the same name. Lessar had already been there, surveying for a railway, and had made an important geographical discovery. The Paropamisus range of mountains, which, we had been taught, separates Turkestan from Herat, does not exist, and a railway can be easily built across its supposed location on the map, over the Pass of Karvan-Ashan, only 300 feet above sea-level. On this route, however, there is no water. So I wished to see whether a practicable road might not be found along the eastern bank of the Tedjend or Herirud River, which flows from Herat past some unexplored mountains into the Trans-Caspian Province, forming a natural frontier between it and Persia.

I started with General Komaroff when he set out for Askhabad, and accompanied him as far as Old Serakhs, a former Persian fortress on the eastern bank of the Tedjend.

From there Lessar, who had just achieved the subjection of the Sarik and Salor Turkoman tribes whose territories extended to the Afghan border, and who was already very ill, accompanied Komaroff to Askhabad, while I started on my reconnoitring expedition to the south. The General gave me an escort of ten Turkoman militiamen, who as former robbers knew very well how the land lay. I may add here that, after the pacification of Ahal-Teke and Merv, the most enterprising Turkoman youths enlisted in the Russian militia. They received thirty roubles a month each, which, as they confessed, was about as much as they could expect to make by plunder in Persia, and that too without running the risk of being impaled if caught. These men were entirely faithful and could be absolutely trusted. During the Great War a regiment of them, wearing the national Turkoman costume, proved impervious to German and Bolshevik propaganda, and of their own free will accompanied the "White" General, Korniloff, from the German front to the Caucasus. My escort, however, stood in considerable dread of the Afghans, and quite approved my effort to visit the Herat Valley unperceived.

In this effort I was not entirely successful. When leaving Komaroff I passed, near a Mussulman shrine, a dervish who seemed to live there, and who asked the Turkomans where we were going. One of them answered jocularly, "To Herat". On reading *The Times* two or three months later I saw a telegram from Meshed, saying that Russian officers had been seen riding to Herat. This was evidently a piece of news transmitted by this dervish to the local chief of the British Intelligence Department, and was, as often happens, wrong.

I need not describe here my journey along the banks of the frontier river to the Herat Valley and back, since a report of it was published in 1885 by our General Staff under the title *A Ride Along the Banks of the Tedjend in*

its booklet of materials concerning Asia. The Karanki Pass, which I was the first European to visit, proved not very difficult, and there was plenty of water—in fact so much that when I wanted to cross the river inside the Herat Valley and follow the opposite (Persian) bank, this proved no easy task. The night before I had not allowed any fires to be lighted in my camp, as the Turkomans had observed in the Pass fresh hoof-prints which they attributed to Afghan horsemen. And a fire in the open plain could be seen from far. When I went out in the morning to make a survey of the river-bank and the neighbouring mountains we had just crossed, I saw in the soft river sand the pad-marks of a large tiger which had been prowling near our camp and disturbing our horses all night. A couple of hours later one of the Turkomans succeeded in discovering a fordable spot, and as my horse was large I crossed without getting wet.

As rapidly as possible I continued my march to the nearest Persian frontier town of Turbet-i-Sheikh-Djam. On our way through this part of the plain of Khorasan, where nothing could be cultivated because of the proximity of Turkoman robbers, we saw some interesting wild asses, fleeter than any horse, which some of my Turkomans vainly tried to catch. The Persians are fond of their flesh, and when they want to hunt them, they hide in deep holes with guns and have them driven towards them to be shot as they pass. *Kulans*, even when taken young, are said to be untamable.

I camped just outside the walls of the town, and at day-break sent my interpreter, Begliaroff, to the Governor, to tell him that I would pay him a visit at nine o'clock. Just as I was about to start, two Persian horsemen arrived in my camp and told my men that they had been following our tracks since the day before. As our horses were Turkoman-shod, they thought they were on the tracks of a

Turkoman raid. I did not want them to get to the Governor before me, so I ordered for them a hospitable reception with tea and food and rode off to the Governor. He was an officer of no high rank, and was greatly astonished to see me arrive from an unwonted direction. He was extremely glad to learn from me that all the Turkomans of Merv and the environs had voluntarily submitted to the White Tzar, and that their raids had ceased for good. I was drinking tea with him when he was told that two of his frontier guards had just arrived and wished to see him. When he learned that they had been pursuing me and had come late, he gave them, in good Persian, some very unpleasant epithets and told them to leave him alone.

The rest of my journey to Askhabad was uneventful, though, when I arrived there, my friends hardly knew me, so disfigured was I by the terrible sunburn of the snow-capped Gaudan Pass, and by more than three months of life in the open, during which I had ridden more than nine hundred miles. General Komaroff and his family were as hospitable and kind to me as on my first visit, and I left them little thinking that in three years' time I was to see them again, arriving in Askhabad via Samarkand, Bokhara, and Merv—by railway!

## CHAPTER XVIII

### I BECOME FIRST RUSSIAN POLITICAL AGENT IN BOKHARA

Campaigning in Bulgaria had first brought me into notice from among the less enterprising and lucky of my youthful contemporaries. So had the expedition to Merv, for which I received the medal "For Campaigns in Central Asia". Henceforth my chiefs at the Foreign Office began to see in me a promising candidate for diplomatic employment in Central Asia. When I reached St. Petersburg I learned that the private letters I had sent from General Komaroff's camp to Zinovieff had given the earliest and most complete news of what was going on in and about Merv, and that these letters had even been submitted by de Giers to Emperor Alexander III. I may add that copies of them were also communicated by the Minister to General von Schweinitz, the German Ambassador in St. Petersburg—a fact which shows the friendly intimacy that still existed at that time between St. Petersburg and Berlin.

My report and survey concerning roads—an alternative route to Herat, and one over the Gaudan Pass into Persia—had been sent on to our General Staff. They contained the latest authentic information about the country through which the future Russo-Afghan frontier would have to be drawn. I happened to be the first European to see the Zulfikar Pass, which soon became famous through the importance attached to it by Lord Salisbury when it was ceded by Russia to Afghanistan. I am afraid this importance was rather exaggerated, as the short cleft I saw in the Barkut Mountains leads practically from nowhere to nowhere. However that may be, the annexation of Merv made necessary a friendly understanding between Russia and Great Britain concerning the whole Central Asian question.

Both sides were equally interested in fixing a precise limit to their respective spheres of influence in those lands, thus completing the agreement concluded in 1872 between Prince Gortchakoff and Lord Granville. This agreement was based on the Amu Daria River, which was to form, from its source in the Pamirs to the village of Hodja Saleh on the Bokhara frontier, the northern limit of Afghanistan and English influence, and the southern limit of the Khanate of Bokhara and Russian influence. This line had now to be continued from Hodja Saleh to the Caspian, and from the source of the Amu Daria in Lake Victoria to the Chinese frontier. In spite of great difficulties, this work was achieved in the course of the following years, thanks chiefly to Lessar, who knew more about this question than any other man living, and who, on entering our Foreign Office, became at once a member of the Russo-British Delimitation Commission. Later he succeeded me as Political Agent in Bokhara, next he served as Councillor of our Embassy in London, and finally became Minister Plenipotentiary in Pekin, where he died before our war with Japan, his health utterly shattered by his earlier labours in Central Asia.

This Russo-British agreement not only secured permanent peace in Central Asia, but paved the way for the final Russo-British *entente* of 1907. Not till then was the process of delimitation completed, by fixing as far as the Persian Gulf the respective spheres of Russian and British political and economic influence. That *entente*, in its turn, made possible the Alliance of Russia with Great Britain and France in the Great War.

Under the aegis of Russo-British friendship the awakening of Central Asia, where the moral influence of Russia predominated, could now advance, in peace, with rapid strides. Up to that time our relations with the Central Asian Khanates had been under the personal direction of the Governor-General of Russian Turkestan, whose residence

was Tashkent and who, in this connection, held about the same powers as the Viceroy of India. With the end of the military phase of the Russian advance in Central Asia these exceptional powers became superfluous, and as the Khanate of Bokhara was by treaty an independent State and also a very important one, our Foreign Office decided to establish there its own permanent resident Political Agent. When I left St. Petersburg for Tashkent in July 1884, I was the bearer of dispatches for the Governor-General, von Rosenbach, successor of General Tcherniaeff, informing him of this decision of the Imperial Government and leaving it to him to select for the post of Political Agent in Bokhara either Petrovsky, Consul in Kashgar, or myself.

Petrovsky was well acquainted with Central Asia. It was to him that Schuyler, the American Consul in St. Petersburg, owed much of the interesting information contained in his book on *Turkestan* which appeared in 1882. The trend of this book was rather pessimistic. The author could not believe in the success of Russian cultural influence in Central Asia, and was even inclined to advise Russians to call on the Chinese for help. After having seen me work as his diplomatic secretary for a few days, the Governor-General wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs that his choice rested on me. It took a year and a half of legislative procedure to complete the work of creating the post and staff of the Russian Political Agency in Bokhara. But, as General von Rosenbach took a liking to my methods and soon placed full confidence in me, I became *de facto*, from the beginning, the diplomatic representative which I was later to become *de jure*.

Thus far the relations of the Governor-General with the Amir had been maintained through Envoys. One of these, Colonel Matveieff of the General Staff, had recently returned from Bokhara. While there he had succeeded, after long and difficult negotiations, in installing a Russian telegraph

station with one wire from Samarkand. This was the first step towards a closer connection between Bokhara and Russia. A couple of months later the Governor-General sent me to the Amir, with a letter of introduction for myself and several letters from me, as diplomatic secretary, to the Grand Vizier of Bokhara, on certain current business matters.

At the time when I was working in the Moscow Archives of the Foreign Office I had studied the reports of the brothers Pazoukhin, who in 1671 had been sent to Bokhara, Khiva, and Balkh as Envoys from the Tzar Alexis, father of Peter the Great. In the summer of 1876 I had read a brief paper in French dealing with these reports at a sitting of the International Congress of Orientalists in St. Petersburg. Now the diplomatic ceremonial with which I was met in the Khanate of Bokhara, and the customs of the Court and of native life which I observed there, were almost exactly the same as those described by our Envoys of over two hundred years before. The Khanate was still a mediaeval Islamic State, governed according to the Mohammedan Law, with no Christian or foreign inhabitants and with an undeveloped commerce and industry. Those few Russian merchants who had been allowed, since our treaty of 1867, to live and trade in Bokhara, were all dressed in native fashion, as were also their womenfolk.

Amir Muzaffar-Eddin was then residing in the city of Bokhara. On my way there I had to pass through Kermine, where, according to custom, lived the heir apparent to the throne, Said Abdul Ahad, newly invested by our Emperor with this official dignity, and with him I had to fulfil one of the most delicate missions of my life. I had to tell him, on behalf of the Governor-General, that the Imperial Government was fully decided to support his candidature to his father's throne on the latter's death, and would use all its forces to achieve this object. In Asiatic countries the position of heir apparent is a dangerous one, and if this

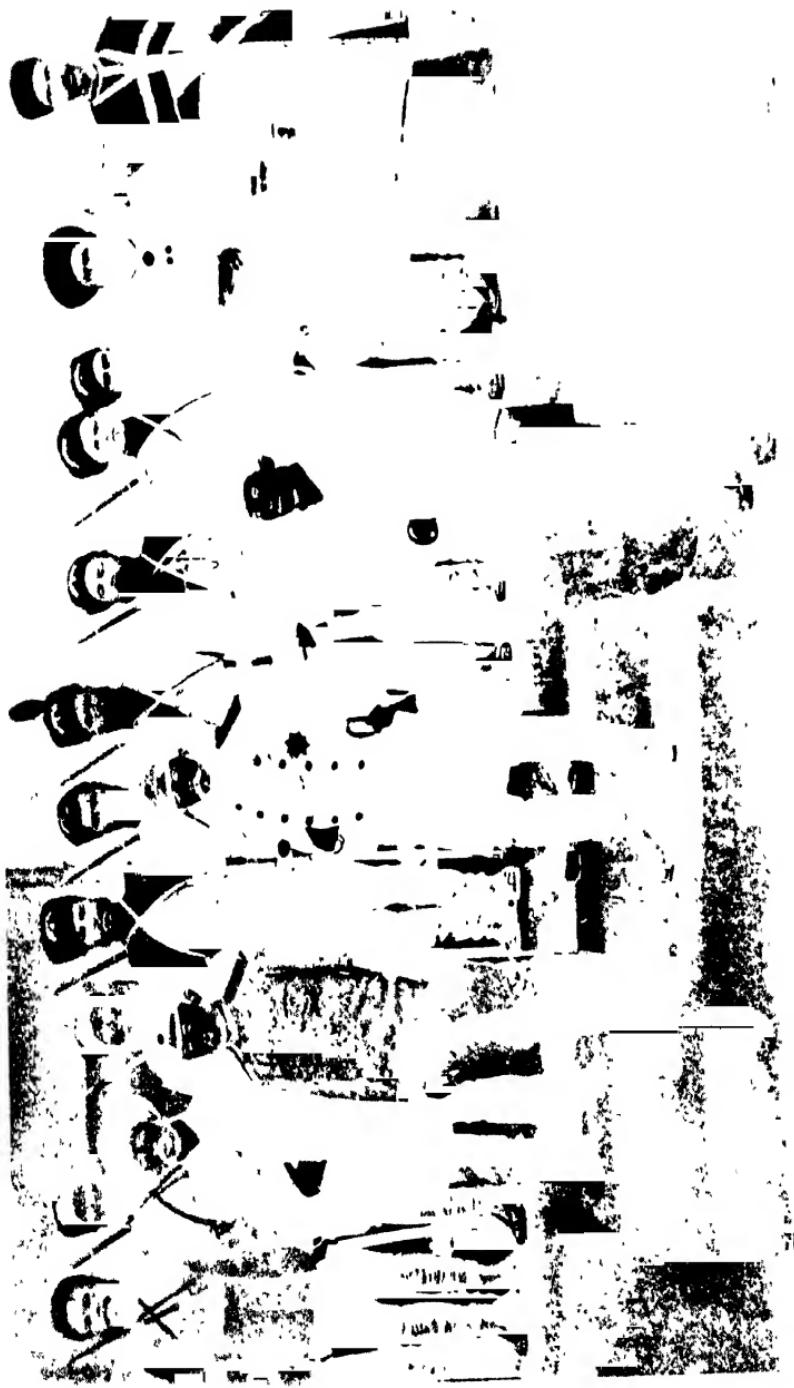
message should in any way reach the ears of his father, it would mean death for him and possibly also for me. In this case, however, Asiatic walls had no ears. Said Abdul Ahad listened to my communication in deep silence, but, as I was to see a year later, with full appreciation of its meaning.

The city of Bokhara, surnamed in the flowery language of the East *el Sherif* (the Noble), lies in the centre of a rich and fruitful oasis on the lower reach of the Zerafshan River, which springs from the Russian glacier of the same name, flows through Samarkand, and finally, below Bokhara, is lost in the sands some miles north of the Amu Daria River. Bokhara is surrounded by high and broad walls with strong gates, which are closed at night. It has a citadel in the middle of it, containing the Amir's Palace, the Treasury, and the Zindan—that famous underground “black hole” in which the father of this Amir had imprisoned the British Colonels Stoddart and Conolly before having them killed.

Quarters were assigned to me, my interpreter, and my escort of twenty Ural Cossacks, in one of the Amir's palaces inside the walls. When riding to the Palace for my first audience I observed scrupulously the etiquette due to an independent Asiatic sovereign. I halted my escort outside the citadel gates, which open on the populous market-place, dismounted, and in view of thousands of natives walked up the paved slope and through the gate to the reception-hall of the Amir, accompanied only by my interpreter, a Russian Mohammedan of Kirghiz origin. In the middle of a great hall, seated on a kind of throne, I saw an old man of medium height and rather stout, clothed in one of the marvellous gold-embroidered Bokhara coats of red velvet. He wore a white-and-gold turban, a native crooked sword in a gold scabbard, and several of his own recently created decorations of the Bokhara Star with huge diamonds. His features were small and wrinkled, but his full beard was dyed a jet black. Our conversation, conducted through

my interpreter, was purely formal. The language used was the Djagatai dialect of Turkish, which was the only one my interpreter happened to know, though the Court and diplomatic language in Bokhara is Persian. The Amir inquired, according to custom, about the health of the Governor-General, and I, when my turn came, inquired about that of the Amir in the name of the Governor-General, a letter from whom I presented to the sovereign. All business matters were reserved for my future interviews with his *Kushbegui*.

After some more general conversation I rose to take my leave, and after shaking hands I walked backwards to the door, making the three bows of the habitual Court ceremonial. In an adjoining room I found a luxurious *dastarkhan*, or “table of refreshments”, set out for me. This comprised tea, served in glasses, Russian fashion, loaves of Russian sugar, and all kinds of Russian and native cakes and sweetmeats, also big dishes of *pilauf*, and an abundance of grapes (which are very good there), peaches, and other fruit. One of the sweetmeats, in the form of round balls, though unknown to me, looked rather attractive, so I took a bite of it and—did not know what to do, for it was simply a compound of sheep’s tallow and sugar. Well, I managed to swallow it, but never touched one of those things again. When this repast was over—of which only I, my interpreter, and the *Kushbegui* partook—I found my horse and my escort drawn up inside the citadel before the doors of the Palace. This was evidently an appreciation of my courtesy on arriving at the citadel. I was told later that the Amir had said, after this audience: “The father of this Envoy must be a very great personage in Russia, because they have sent to me such a very young man.” It is true that I was only twenty-nine at the time, and, although I had begun growing my beard on leaving St. Petersburg, it had not yet made much progress.



THE FIRST RUSSIAN POLITICAL AGENT IN BOKHARA, HIS STAFF AND ESCORT, 1886

× N. V. TCHARYKOW



I spent about a fortnight in Bokhara, visiting the interesting monuments of the city, and, first of all, that Russian telegraph station which had been recently opened and which was located in a small building just inside the city wall, near the Samarkand road. The *bazar* was large, populous, and interesting. The Russians were prosperous and doing a good business, in spite of the great difficulty of transport to and from Russia. The nearest, and as yet the only, road was used by camels, and lay through Tashkent and Orenburg, a distance of over 2,000 miles of oasis, sand, or snow.

On my rides through the town I was accompanied by my escort, whose N.C.O. always carried a bag of Bokhara silver coins for distribution to the numerous beggars of the city. According to the Islamic teaching the giving of alms is a duty, so that a beggar never thanks you for the money he receives. I remember that one of these men, seated at the entrance of a mosque, refused to accept a coin from my Cossack. On the whole I noticed that the common people were very reserved, and even sullen, towards the Russians, and followed in this respect the traditional attitude of the Mohammedans towards the Christians in the Middle Ages. Before I left the Amir sent me, through his Chamberlain, Rahmetullah, a wily old Bokharan dignitary, who was usually employed as Envoy to Tashkent, the highest grade of his order of the Star of Bokhara. It was made by hand, of pure gold, by Bokhara goldsmiths, with a blue enamel centrepiece inscribed in Arabic. Later these stars were made in St. Petersburg.

A special class among the Bokhara mendicants were the lepers. They sat or lay on the ground in hideous groups near the city gates. Their women wore no veils, and many of them were horribly disfigured by this dread disease. These people had no objection to receiving alms from a Cossack. A well-known Russian doctor, who was making

a study of leprosy, came to me in Bokhara to pursue his investigations on the spot. As there were no hotels there at that time, he naturally stayed with me, and I obtained for him the full assistance of the local authorities. Even then he had already reached the conviction that leprosy is neither hereditary nor contagious. Let me add that the only women in Central Asian towns who were not only allowed, but obliged, to go unveiled, were the lepers and the harlots. This circumstance will help us to understand why the recent attempt of the Amir of Afghanistan to do away with veils for Mohammedan women roused such opposition among many of his subjects.

During this stay in Bokhara I had a unique opportunity of making astronomy serve the interests of diplomacy. Before leaving Tashkent I had learned from my friend the director of the local astronomical and meteorological observatory, Colonel Pomerantzoff, that there would occur, at 2.10 a.m. on a certain night in July of that year, a full eclipse of the moon, visible in Bokhara. At my first audience with the Amir I told him about this, adding that, as I had heard that his subjects were usually disquieted by that phenomenon (as all Mohammedan masses are), I should be glad if this information given beforehand might be useful in allaying any anxiety among them. The old Amir seemed rather surprised that I should possess this knowledge, but thanked me greatly, and invited me to spend two or three days at the time of the eclipse in one of his palaces not far from Bokhara. I gratefully accepted, and was conducted thither in due time by Rahmetullah, whom I have already mentioned. The night was wonderful: not a cloud in the sky, and a full moon throwing its silver glory over the flourishing oasis of Bokhara. A little before 2 a.m. Rahmetullah came to me, and we went out on the terrace overlooking the garden, with the capital lying in the distance, and began awaiting the eclipse. At 2.10 the Bokharan diplomat

became sceptical, and I myself was not quite sure that between the astronomical time of Tashkent and Bokhara there might not be a few minutes of unascertained difference. But at the precise time indicated to me by the Russian astronomer, a slight dent appeared on the outer edge of the moon. Then with the ineluctable regularity of astronomical phenomena the eclipse grew and at last became full. As soon as the eclipse started a great noise was heard from the direction of the city—drums beating, shouts, muskets being fired—and all this lasted till the end. Meanwhile Rahmetullah proceeded to tell me that the dates of eclipses were also known to their men of science, and that a celebrated Khan of Samarkand, Ulug Beg, possessed an observatory there and was able to predict lunar eclipses. This was quite true, but I must say that my announcement of the coming eclipse to the Amir certainly helped to increase Russian prestige and my personal influence in Bokhara.

On returning to Tashkent I made a detailed report to the Governor-General of the impressions I had gathered during this my first mission to Bokhara. General von Rosenbach was fully satisfied with it, and sent to the Foreign Office copies of my reports, which I accompanied by private letters to Zinovieff, under whose able guidance our Central Asian affairs began to prosper greatly.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Some idea of my work in Bokhara may be gathered from the description I find of it in the book of a French traveller who saw me there in 1888. See *Notes de Voyage d'un Hussard*, by Jean de Pontèves de Sabran. Paris, Calman Lévy, 1892.

## CHAPTER XIX

## BOKHARA ENTERS A NEW ERA

After my first visit to the Khanate of Bokhara I concentrated my attention and efforts on the complete abolition of slavery in the Khanate, the suppression of the Zindan prison, and the construction of the Russian railway across the Khanate. To accomplish this last I had been invited, by a private letter from Zinovieff, to attempt a negotiation on the subject with the Bokhara Government.

This letter was couched in very prudent terms, but it mentioned the rapid progress which was being made in continuing the Trans-Caspian military railway on which I had travelled from the Caspian Sea to Kizil Arvat. It was now planned to carry it, not only to Askhabad and Merv, but also through Bokhara to Samarkand and Tashkent. This idea was new and brilliant, as it would settle in the most satisfactory way the whole difficult question of Russian military and commercial communications in Central Asia. Evidently, however, the consent of the Amir had first to be obtained, and I was told to take advantage of my next journey to Bokhara to raise this question with great circumspection and delicacy.

When, therefore, in July 1885 the Governor-General sent me again to the Amir, the railway was mentioned in one of von Rosenbach's letters to the Amir, and I had the good luck to do a great deal more than Zinovieff expected of me. I was also greatly helped by what had happened on the Afghan frontier in March 1885, when General Komaroff had repulsed, at Kushk, an attempted invasion by Afghan regular troops into the territory which we considered, and which was later admitted to be, Russian. In this expedition the Afghans were accompanied by the British members of the Russo-British Commission, which

was to delimit the Russo-Afghan frontier between the territory of Persia on the River Tedjend and that of Bokhara on the Amu Daria. This was the first and only battle ever waged between Russians and Afghans. Since the latter were regarded as the finest fighting nation of Central Asia, this Russian victory greatly enhanced our prestige in the whole of the Middle East.

When I broached the subject of our railway in my audience with the Amir, I of course made clear first of all the economic and commercial advantages of this railway for his subjects; but this line of argument did not greatly impress him. Then I also pointed out that the latest Afghan aggression had obliged the Imperial Government to take precautionary measures for defending the territory of both Russia and Bokhara against a possible continuation of such a hostile policy on the part of the Afghan Amir, whose possessions extended to the very banks of the Amu Daria River opposite Bokhara. A railway would permit of Russian troops being brought rapidly and in sufficient numbers from the Caspian to the Amu Daria, and enable us to repulse any attack in that region.

The Amir saw my point. He not only consented to the building of our railway through the Khanate to Samarkand in any direction that best suited us, but also expressed his readiness to donate all the uncultivated land through which it would pass, and all the ballast of sand and stone it would need. He referred me to his *Kushbegui* for the settlement of the details. He then asked me to transmit to my Government his desire and hope that, if war should break out between Russia and Afghanistan, Russia would take into consideration the historic right of Bokhara to the province lying on the left bank of the Amu Daria called Char Vilayet. This province is inhabited by a people of the same nationality as the Khanate of Bokhara (Sarts), and was conquered by the Afghans only quite recently. I readily

promised to submit this wish of the Amir to the consideration of the Imperial Government, and did so; as, however, our delimitation in common with Afghanistan ended peacefully, the question of Char Vilayet was not raised. Nevertheless, when we succeeded in freeing from Afghan domination the provinces of Roshan and Shughnan, partly inhabited by Sarts, we handed these two provinces over to the Amir's son and successor, Said Abdul Ahad. We did this the more readily because both Russia and Great Britain wished to avoid all immediate contact between their respective areas in Asia, and preferred maintaining between them a system of "Buffer States".

Before this audience ended the Amir also expressed a desire that the Bokhara railway station should not be nearer than six miles to the city itself, because his people were old-fashioned and ignorant and might be troubled if it were to be built close to their houses. When two years later General Annenkov and I selected the site of the station, which was to be called "New Bokhara", we fixed it at a spot about seven miles away from the Amir's capital. Very soon, however, the natives ceased to fear the railway, and as the merchants of Bokhara felt the inconvenience of the station being so far away, Amir Said Abdul Ahad built at his own expense a branch line from that station into the old city. Some conversations between the *Kushbegui* and myself followed this audience, but they could hardly be called negotiations, since the Bokhara Government was ready to accede to all our wishes. The agreement which we reached was drawn up by me in the form of a Protocol, written in Russian and Persian, and signed by me and a delegate of the Amir on July 18/30, 1885.

The first practical question was the direction in which our railway should cross the Khanate. The shortest way between Merv and Samarkand would have lain through the town of Bourdalik on the Amu Daria, but it would have

passed through an almost desert country. The route through Tjardjui, while about eighty miles longer, as far as I could see on my very imperfect map, would open up the most fertile parts of the Khanate. To settle this matter in my own mind I made a trip beyond the city of Bokhara to Tjardjui and to Bourdalik, returning thence to the Amir, who had in the meantime already moved to his summer residence in Karshi.

This proved a most interesting journey, as very few Europeans had ever travelled on the banks of the Amu Daria, and none as yet with a view to railway construction. Before reaching the river I had to cross a broad and high belt of sandy dunes, from the top of which I suddenly looked out upon a wide expanse of fertile fields, a magnificent river about two miles wide studded with islands, and then again fields and trees on the farther side, backed by another series of sand-dunes—the Kara Kum Desert—which stretched on to Merv. Since I had left Samarkand I had not drunk a drop of water, because that of Bokhara is infected with a germ called *rishta* (*Filaria medinensis*), which about eight months after having been swallowed develops into a white worm about two feet long, that in trying to make its way out of the body forms an abscess under the skin. Boiling the water kills the germ, hence I, with my staff and Cossacks, absolutely avoided drinking unboiled water, or eating fruit which might have been washed in such water. But even boiling could not make the Bokhara water more palatable, so that we drank only tea, mineral water, or wine. When we reached the oasis I found fine tents prepared for me, and the usual *dastarkhan*. When taking my tea I noticed a large porcelain bowl standing in a corner of the tent on a carpet and filled with the most tantalizing crystal-clear liquid. When, on asking what this was, I was told it was water from the Amu Daria, I took the bowl with both hands and drained it to the last drop. It was the most delicious

drink I have ever had in my whole life. Until I crossed the sand-dunes again into the interior, I could revel in this pure water, which comes from the glaciers of the Pamir.

Tjardjui was a small frontier village with a fort perched above it, where I visited an old man, the Governor, the majority of the people under his jurisdiction being peaceable Turkomans of the Ersari tribe. The only difficulty which railway construction would meet with here, as also in Bourdalik, would be the sand-dunes. But with these the builders of the Trans-Caspian line had already learned how to deal.

On returning to Bokhara I had to take up the complicated question of slavery in the Khanate. The Russo-Bokhara treaty of friendship and commerce of 1867 had abolished the "shameful traffic in slaves", but had not set free the slaves already in Bokhara. I knew that many hundreds of slaves were owned by the Amir himself, by his courtiers and other subjects, and that, being mostly Persians and also clever, they were in many ways useful to their masters. It is true that since the pacification of Merv no more slaves were brought to the market in Central Asia, so I thought it my duty to use all my influence to abolish slavery completely in the neighbouring State of Bokhara. To this end I made it a rule to set free all slaves who applied to me for protection, and never tired of repeating to the *Kushbegui* that, as long as slavery existed in Bokhara, friendship between Russia and Bokhara would not be complete.

When I was approaching the capital on my return from Tjardjui, a man suddenly jumped out of some bushes and stopped my carriage. When a Cossack asked what was the matter, he said he was a Persian slave who had run away from his master, and, having heard of the arrival of a Russian Envoy to Bokhara, appealed for my protection. I ordered

RUSSIAN MERCHANTS IN BOKHARA BEFORE THE REFORMS





the Cossacks to take him with us to my residence. When I questioned the man, I told him he might remain with us, and that I would send him in a short time back to his native land. Another Persian was waiting for me in the City, having told me already in Tashkent that he had succeeded in tracing his sister to a certain merchant's house in Bokhara, and hoped I would assist him in freeing her. I was also informed about another Persian woman who lived as a slave in the city. So I asked the Bokhara authorities to send to me these two women and their masters. They came the next day, and I learned from the former woman that she would be glad to return with her brother to the home from which a Turkoman raid had carried her away not long before. Her master, a wealthy merchant, to whom I also spoke apart, offered no objections, so I ordered this woman to remain with us till she could be sent home. On the other hand, the other woman told me very frankly that several years had passed since she had been captured by the Turkomans, that she did not know if any of her relations were still living in the Khorasan village from which she came, that her master was good to her, and that she had borne him a son, which, according to Mussulman Law, made her a legitimate wife. She would therefore prefer remaining where she was. Her master confirmed all she had said, and was willing to keep her. So I told each of them separately that the will of the White Tzar was that all people should be free to remain in Bokhara or to leave it, as they wished, and that, since the wish of this woman was to remain, she was at liberty to do so. On the following day a caravan was sent off by me to Merv, carrying to their homes all the liberated slaves. The complete abolition of slavery in the Khanate was thus gradually and peaceably prepared.<sup>1</sup> I followed the same policy in the matter of the Zindan, as I told the *Kushbegui*

<sup>1</sup> In the British Colony of Sierra Leone slavery was definitely abolished in 1928.

(who knew that I was to be appointed Resident Political Agent in the Khanate) more than once that I could not live in Bokhara side by side with that infamous prison. But how and when these reforms were to be carried out I could not, and did not, know.

## CHAPTER XX

## AMIR SAID ABDUL AHAD THE REFORMER

The reforms which were begun by Amir Muzaffar Eddin were resolutely and rapidly advanced by his son and successor, Said Abdul Ahad, justly surnamed "the Reformer". The old Amir died in Karshi, while his heir was in Kermine and the actual ruler of the land, the *Kushbegui*, in the city of Bokhara. It was thanks to the astuteness and resolution of the *Kushbegui* that our plan of avoiding trouble and bloodshed at the succession of the new Amir was carried out. The *Kushbegui* ordered the fact of the Amir's death to be kept absolutely secret. His body, dressed in his usual apparel, was bound to the seat of his travelling two-wheeled cart with a lowered hood, and thus brought to the citadel of Bokhara. At the same time the heir was summoned from Kermine to Bokhara, and rode thither in great haste with but a few retainers. As luck would have it, on his way he overtook General Annenkoff, who with his engineers was driving back from Tashkent to Merv, carrying the final plans of the Bokhara railway. So the very first thing the new Amir did, on proclaiming to the people his accession, was to receive officially in audience, in his palace, the Russian General, who, of course, showed him all the respect due to a reigning sovereign of Bokhara. This happened on November 1/13, 1885.

In the afternoon of that day I was taking tea with some friends in Tashkent when I was suddenly summoned to the Acting Governor-General, Grodekoff (later of Manchurian fame), who was temporarily at the head of the Government since von Rosenbach's departure for St. Petersburg three days before. Grodekoff read to me a telegram he had just received from Bokhara, announcing the old Amir's death and his son's accession, and asked me

what were the instructions of the Foreign Office in view of this contingency. I at once brought from my office the order of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, confirmed by the Emperor, instructing the Governor-General to recognize Said Abdul Ahad without delay and to assist him with all our forces.

Grodekoff belonged to that group of Russian military men in Turkestan who aimed at annexing Bokhara, while the Foreign Office wished it to remain independent. Being, however, a loyal soldier, he obeyed these orders, and we drew up at once twelve or more telegrams to different persons and institutions in conformity with these instructions. The first was a telegram of congratulation addressed to the Amir in Bokhara, and, as it was most important that this message should reach the new sovereign immediately, I drove at once to the central telegraph office of Tashkent to see it sent off. Just at that time a terrible thunderstorm, accompanied by torrential rain, had begun. When I reached the telegraph office, the head clerk tried to communicate with Bokhara, but was at first unable to do so. I must say that I felt great anxiety lest a revolution might have broken out in Bokhara and our one and only telegraph-wire been cut. Fortunately, after long and strenuous efforts, we succeeded in getting the message through to Bokhara, and received an answer from the Russian telegraph-clerk there saying that all was quiet and that the message would be delivered directly to the Amir. Telegraphic orders were also sent to General Yafimovitch, commander of the Samarkand garrison, to hold his troops ready to march to Bokhara, and to send thither Captain Kartzoff to act, in case of need, as military adviser to the Amir. Grodekoff, however, soon received an answer from the Amir, informing him that all was quiet in the Khanate and that, with his best thanks, he was in need of no military help.

On the very day of his accession Said Abdul Ahad published an order setting free all the slaves in the Khanate of

Bokhara, including several hundred belonging to himself, and closing the Zindan for ever. The hundred-odd prisoners who had been confined there were brought before the Amir, who dealt out to them summary justice, letting many go free and having a few notable criminals executed. In this way he began his reign of reform, which was destined, in the course of nearly thirty years, to bring peace and plenty to his people, along with the cordial sympathy and assistance of the Imperial Government. The latter, however, abstained scrupulously from meddling with the interior administration of the Bokhara Government.

The following deserve special mention among the various reforms instituted by Abdul Ahad. At his accession he prohibited the public display of dancing boys (*batchas*), this having been a favourite pastime of his father and of many wealthy inhabitants of Bokhara. On my first arrival in that city the old Amir sent to me in the evening a troupe of his best *batchas*, who danced and sang before me. They were good-looking boys of about twelve years, dressed up as women, and were eyed with vivid interest by the Bokhara courtiers who were present. I found their music, which consisted of screaming at the top of their voices, and all their antics most unsavoury, but, of course, I could not openly express my opinion on this subject. Its abolition was a step in the right direction.

Another reform consisted in the doing away with certain methods of execution. Ordinary criminals, when condemned to death by a *cadi* (Mohammedan judge), had their throats cut publicly in the city market-place. But in exceptional cases other forms of death were applied. For instance, when the eldest son of the *Kushbegui*, then Minister of Finance, was killed by a native of Bokhara, apparently from some private grudge, the assassin was delivered into the hands of his victim's relatives. These dragged him into the street and literally tore and hacked him to pieces. In another case,

a man who had robbed some shops in the Bokhara *bazar*—a heinous crime—was led to the top of the highest minaret of the city, tied in a bag, and thrown to his death in the courtyard below. All these unnecessarily cruel practices were stopped by the young Amir. The above-mentioned minaret has now, I learn, become a Government radio transmitting station.

A further important reform was the result of an agreement negotiated by my successor, Lessar, with the Bokhara Government concerning a Customs treaty between Russia and Bokhara. According to this agreement the Russian Customs frontier was pushed forward to the Amu Daria, touching the newly defined Afghan frontier. The Central Customs Administration was located in the town of Termez on the Bokhara bank of the Amu Daria. The Khanate was in no wise the loser by this combination, because its trade with Afghanistan increased, and it received the same percentage of Customs duties (5 per cent. *ad valorem*) as it did before.

The young Amir soon found it useful to build a railway from Termez through Karshi to Bokhara, and to connect the station of New Bokhara with the old town. This railway extension was built by Russian engineers, but at the Amir's expense, and it became possible, of course, only after the trunk-line from Merv to Bokhara and Samarkand had been built and had proved its utility.

Soon after Abdul Ahad's accession the Governor-General of Turkestan sent to Bokhara a special mission to compliment him on this occasion. At the head of the mission was the Military Governor of Samarkand, General Yafimovitch, whom I accompanied. The reception prepared for us by the Amir was magnificent. Several regiments of infantry were drawn up outside the gates of the city through which we were to pass, and cannon were put in position to fire salutes on our approach. The Russian mission entered the city on

horseback, preceded by a great number of the highest Bokharan dignitaries. When the head of this procession reached the guns, they began firing, and, being pointed towards the road, they caused havoc among the Bokharans, whose horses bolted in all directions. At last the order to cease fire was given, and the General and I could proceed on our way in peace.

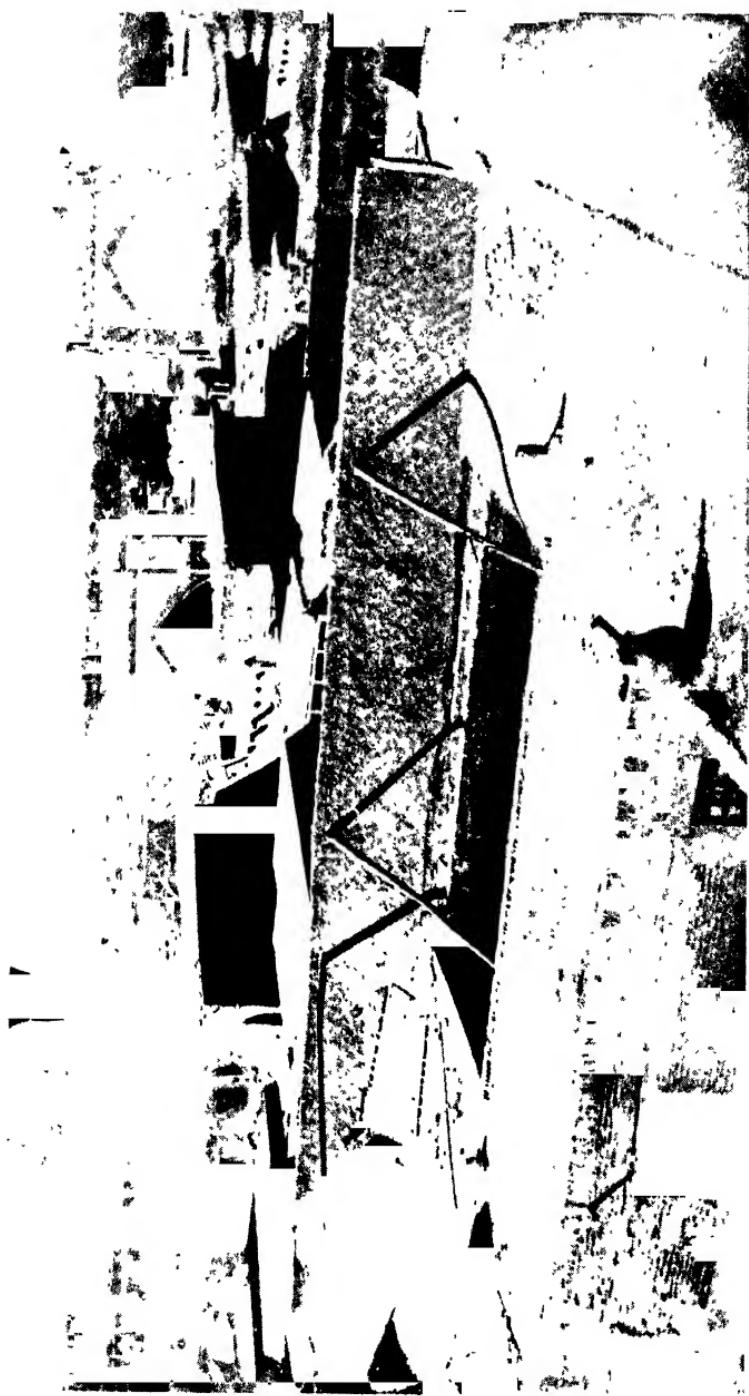
A still more impressive reception was accorded me when, two months later, I entered Bokhara as Resident Political Agent. Only this time the guns were pointed the proper way! This reception was considered important enough to be fully described in the *Gazette* published in St. Petersburg, as I was bearer of a high decoration awarded by the Emperor to the Amir. These excellent relations continued during the Amir's whole lifetime, and culminated in his receiving from the Emperor the title of "Highness". When he came to St. Petersburg he was treated as an independent sovereign. I remember how, at a great official ball in the Winter Palace, His Highness was seated at supper on the right of the Empress. During the Russo-Japanese War the Amir presented to the Tzar a destroyer, built specially at Kronstadt and called *Amir of Bokhara*. Ultimately he bought a villa in the Crimea in the neighbourhood of the Emperor's estate of Livadia, where he preferred to spend the summer months rather than in the terribly hot Bokhara, making the long journey by rail in his own private train. There it was that I saw him for the last time in 1909, when I came to the Crimea with the Turkish Embassy as Russian Ambassador in Constantinople. On the 1st of January of every year, as long as he lived, Amir Said Abdul Ahad used to telegraph me his best wishes for the New Year wherever I happened to be.

## CHAPTER XXI

## THE BUILDING OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN RAILWAY

The railway agreement signed in Bokhara on July 18/30, 1885, was duly sanctioned by the Emperor, and became the basis of the arduous task which was boldly undertaken and achieved by General Annenkoff. The route was decided on during General Annenkoff's visit to Tashkent in October of the same year. His idea was that the railway should follow that historic commercial road which, since time immemorial, had passed through the cities of Merv and Bokhara, and which inside the Khanate tapped the most fruitful parts of the Bokhara oasis. The River Amu Daria was to be crossed near the town of Tjardjui. Thus this town became the first inhabited point in Bokharan territory in which the Trans-Caspian Railway made its appearance after finding its way through the desolate sand-dunes of the Kara Kum Desert.

I need not rehearse here either the technical difficulties or the ingenious expedients the engineers employed in surmounting them. This railway passes through the greatest sand-dunes in the world, which lie scattered between the Caspian Sea and Samarkand over a total distance of 1,415 *versts* or 990 miles. Meanwhile the French Trans-Saharan Railway to the south of Algiers, over a total length of roughly 1,200 miles to the basin of the Niger River, remains still in its initial stages of study. Annenkoff adopted the American system: rails first. This was all the more suitable to the conditions, because all the varieties of railway material and equipment had to be transported thither from the forests, brick-kilns, and factories of European Russia. The water problem was overcome by running one special train every day to carry sweet water in the required quantities to each station on the line. The General's work was simplified by



THE HIGHEST MINARET IN THE CITY OF BOIKHARA FROM WHICH DISTINGUISHED PRISONERS WERE THROWN



the fact that, as this was a military railway, all the technical work could be done by the two battalions of sappers at his disposal, while native labour was used only for the digging and filling. Unskilled labour was superabundant in the Khanate, not only because the new Amir favoured our undertaking, but also because Annenkoff introduced a system of regular weekly cash payments to all the natives employed. Wages were paid in the Bokhara silver coins called *tenga*, worth about sixpence each, and coined in the Government mint in Bokhara from chemically pure silver imported by Annenkoff for this purpose from Hamburg.

One of the great days of my life was when the first train coming from Merv steamed into the future station of Tjardjui. On this occasion I gave a ball to all Annenkoff's officers and engineers and their families. The new Governor of Tjardjui, one of the youthful sons of the *Kushbegui*, lent us one of the big roomy houses of the old town, the inner court of which we transformed into a fine ballroom overlooked by a series of balconies. When I seated myself on one of these, next to the *Bek* (Governor), and he saw the couples beginning to dance, he asked me confidentially, "How much do you pay them?" According to the Oriental usage dancers are hired, like the personnel of a ballet. But when the *Bek* saw General Annenkoff and myself join also in the dance, he came to understand that this was a matter of pleasure and not a matter of business.

That first train disembarked a battalion of sappers, naturally provided with all their arms and ammunition, who camped in their tents on the left bank of the Amu Daria River. When the news of this arrival reached Bokhara a hostile anti-Russian movement began, fostered by some fanatical mullahs, who began preaching in the mosques about the imminent capture of Bokhara by the Russian soldiers. I telegraphed this piece of news to our Foreign Office, and in answer received from Zinovieff a telegram

ordering me to go immediately to the Amir and to draw his particular attention to what was going on in his capital, and to the danger which his country and he himself would incur if this agitation continued. I at once crossed the Amu Daria on one of the two steam-launches which had been already brought up from the Caspian and were the first ever to appear on a Central Asian river, rode over the sand-dunes, and reached Bokhara without loss of time. The Amir received me on the following morning in an audience that lasted over an hour. At the end of it, having come to understand what the situation was, he said to me: "Be assured that this agitation will cease immediately, and that nothing is going to endanger the existing friendly relations with the Russian Government."

In the course of this audience I had explained to the Amir that the Russian military forces were in no wise directed against him, but were, on the contrary, to shield Bokhara against any hostile Afghan attempts; also, that I should be very glad to inform my Government that the Amir would have no objection to our sending a sufficient garrison to the town of Kerki, on the Afghan frontier on the middle reach of the Amu Daria. To this the Amir willingly consented. The Chief Military Engineer of Turkestan, General von Ziegerncorn, was sent for soon after this to choose a site for a small fort not far from the frontier. Later a couple of field-guns were sent there, and a permanent garrison of two battalions of infantry, a regiment of Astrakhan Cossacks, and some field artillery were installed in Kerki. When I first visited this little town in the very heart of Central Asia, I found it the wildest and weirdest place I had ever seen. But soon it became one of the three Russian settlements which we then founded in the Khanate, and which we called New Tjardjui, New Kerki, and lastly New Bokhara. Within a year or so two Russian paddle-steamers, under the command of naval officers, were keeping up communi-

cations between Kerki (later also Termez), Tjardjui, and Khiva.

At Tjardjui the Amu Daria was very broad, and the Chief Engineer, Roudneff, a man of great talent, found it absolutely necessary to carry at least a telephone-wire across the river to keep in touch with the other side. A line of strong piles, brought from the Upper Volga, was therefore driven into the sandy bottom of the river and across the islands with which it is strewn, and a telephone-wire was successfully carried across. Seeing this, Roudneff thought that it might perhaps be possible to lay some planks upon the piles, side by side with the wire, so as to allow him and his workmen to cross the river on foot. New piles were driven in, and this improvised structure held good. Next Roudneff and Annenkoff decided to throw across the whole river a wooden bridge sufficiently strong for the railway. This bridge was nearly two miles long, and it lasted for fifteen years, till it was replaced by one of stone and steel. The greatest precautions were taken against danger, not from water, but from fire. A special officer—a colonel of Engineers, Horvat, who became later the well-known chief of the Russo-Chinese Railway in Manchuria—was placed in charge of the bridge. In St. Petersburg it had been expected that all supplies for the further building of the railway to Bokhara and Samarkand would have to cross the river in boats, a very slow and costly procedure. But the unexpected building of the Amu Daria bridge swept away all these expenses and difficulties.

Speaking of General Annenkoff's telephone reminds me of the following incident. While the railway station in New Bokhara was being built, one of the *Kushbegui*'s sons, who was then Minister of Finance and later succeeded his father, was shown the telephone. To acquaint him with its working, I advised him to send his secretary to the next telephone station, about two miles away, whence the secre-

tary would then speak to him. Soon the telephone bell rang, and I shall never forget the astonishment of the Minister when, through the receiver, he heard his secretary's voice and answered him. After a short conversation he said to me: "I quite understand that the Russians, who are so wonderfully clever, should invent a machine to talk to each other in their own tongue. But how that machine can speak Persian I cannot understand."

Before the final phase of the railway's construction had been reached, I took advantage of the perfect peace then reigning in the Khanate to obtain a six months' leave of absence to go to Russia and abroad, accrediting as Chargé d'Affaires the Secretary of our Political Agency, William O. Clemm. This young man of great gifts was a wonderful linguist, who could speak, read, and write perfectly in seven or eight European and Oriental languages. He arrived in Tashkent with a young Russian wife, who there bore him a son—the first Russian subject born in the Khanate of Bokhara. Later Clemm became Consul-General in Khorasan, Chief of the Central Asian Section of our Foreign Office, and, during the Bolshevik Revolution, Foreign Secretary to the "White" Russian Government of Eastern Siberia. My aim in going abroad at that time was to compare the situation of Central Asian Mohammedans with that of their co-religionists in the Near East. But this subject deserves a chapter to itself.

## CHAPTER XXII

### ISLAM IN THE NEAR EAST AND IN CENTRAL ASIA COMPARED

After spending three years in Central Asia I was very glad to see again my friends in various parts of Russia and in St. Petersburg, and to receive high commendation from my chiefs. But I very soon set out on my trip abroad, sailing from Odessa to Constantinople, where I spent some weeks. Crossing to Asia Minor, I travelled first by rail from Smyrna to the Cassaba railhead at Alashehr, then on horseback across a sparsely peopled, mountainous country inhabited only by Turks, into the fruitful Aidin Valley, where for the first time I saw oranges growing in gardens. After a look at the ruins of Ephesus I returned to Smyrna, where, being young and having plenty of money, I had a very good time. Next I crossed to Greece, saw a good deal of Athens, travelled with my friend and kinsman George Bakhmetieff (later Ambassador at Washington) to the Isthmus of Corinth, where the canal was then being built, inspected the excavations at Mycenae, and visited Thessaly, which had but recently been annexed to Greece.

From Greece I sailed to Egypt and went up the Nile as far as Luxor. The Mahdist Dervishes were then in control of the Nile as far north as Wady Halfa. Near Suez I saw the battlefield of Tel-el-Kebir, where a few years before a British force had defeated the Egyptian Nationalist leader Arabi Pasha, and thus begun the occupation of Egypt. My friend and colleague Koyander introduced me to the Khedive Tewfik, and to his celebrated Armenian Prime Minister, Nubar Pasha. Then I left Egypt for Palestine and Syria. I disembarked at Jaffa, where as yet there was no railway to Jerusalem, and arranged with the Russian Vice-Consul there for a carriage trip to Jerusalem later, after

my return from Syria, as I wanted to visit the Lebanon before the beginning of the approaching winter. Our Consul-General in Beirut offered me a hearty and hospitable reception, and saw me off to Baalbek with its magnificent ruins. At Damascus I found considerable friction and distrust still existing between the local Christians and Mohammedans, the former being not yet free of fear lest the massacres of 1861, which had brought on the first French occupation of Syria, might any day be renewed. On my return from Syria to Palestine a very rough sea prevented my ship from disembarking any passengers at Jaffa and obliged me to go on to Port Said. There a telegram from the Foreign Office reached me, informing me that Clemm had fallen dangerously ill and ordering me to return at once to Bokhara.

As a result of this journey I was deeply impressed with the difference between the situation of Islam in Central Asia and in the Near East. In Bokhara and the adjoining Islamic countries there are no native Christians, for the Nestorians, who, before the advent of Islam, had a bishop in Merv and had spread eastward even into China, were all either annihilated or converted to Islam by their Moslem conquerors in the seventh century. Within modern times the only Christians in Central Asia have been a few Russians, and these came to reside in Bokhara only after the awakening of Central Asia had begun. The building of the railway brought with it many more Russians, and some other foreigners of Christian faith. So it was agreed between the Russian and Bokharan Governments that all such persons were to have rights of extra-territoriality under the protection and jurisdiction of the Russian Political Agency, while all questions which might arise between such persons and natives of Bokhara were to be discussed and decided by an agreement between the Political Agency and the native authorities.

In the Near East, in so far as it had been conquered by

the Turks, i.e. in Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Thrace, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, and Greece, the Islamic masters had subdued an ancient Christian population larger in numbers than they and with a higher civilization than their own. Since the Koran orders the conversion or destruction of the "infidels" but grants life to those who possess "the Book" (the Bible), that is, to Christians and Jews, these were allowed by the Arabs and the Turks to maintain their religious communities as they had hitherto existed, but under the appellation of *Rayah*, which term is a synonym of "cattle".

Here lay the source of all the troubles in the Near East, beginning with the Crusades. The conquered Christians looked abroad for help, and often obtained military or diplomatic assistance from the Christian Powers of Europe, the "Latins" principally from France, and the "Greek Orthodox" principally, and in an increasing proportion, from Russia. These rights of protection were secured to France by her Capitulations, and for Russia by the Russo-Turkish treaty of Kutchuk Kainardji of 1774. Later, the increasing sufferings of the Christians under Turkish mal-administration and the growth of European military and political power encouraged the Turkish Christians to complain and to seek for help. The first to do so successfully were the Greeks, and with the establishment of the Hellenic Kingdom, secured by the Russo-Turkish treaty of 1829, began the gradual and ineluctable process of the liberation of the European Christian provinces of Turkey in Europe, culminating in the Russo-Turkish War of Liberation of 1877-8.

It must in justice be admitted that the Sultans generally did what they could to satisfy the demands for security and prosperity raised by their Christian subjects. This was the avowed aim of the Turkish reforms of 1832 and 1856, but these good intentions were hampered by the fact that

the Sultans of Turkey were also, during four centuries, the Caliphs of Islam, and consequently could not enact laws in contradiction with the principles of the Koran.<sup>1</sup> But Koranic Law has proved more and more unsuited to the needs of the present day, not only for the Turkish Christians, but for the Turks themselves. It was only on the advent of the present Angora Government of Mustapha Kemal Pasha in 1922 that "Church and State" became separated in Turkey, and this has made it possible for the Government of the new Turkish Republic to institute those long-needed and useful reforms which have lately been brought into effect. When I visited the Near East in 1887, this fundamental difficulty of internal Ottoman administration was at its worst, and little hope could be held out for its peaceful and successful elimination. It was with this conviction that I returned to my task in Bokhara.

<sup>1</sup> See "The Pope and the Caliph, a Study in Comparative Diplomacy", by N. V. Tcharykow, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1924.

## CHAPTER XXIII

THE CENTRAL ASIAN RAILWAY REACHES SAMARKAND.  
ITS CULTURAL CONSEQUENCES

When I returned to Bokhara in January 1888, travelling by rail as far as Tjardjui, Annenkoff's work had progressed admirably. The Amu Daria bridge was built, supplies of all kinds were being transported well and rapidly to the builders, and the time had come to choose the location for the station and town of New Bokhara. Soon after my arrival in Tjardjui I broke my leg, by falling at night into one of the ditches that marked the new town site, which I myself, with the help of Colonel Kazantzoff, commander of the Russian garrison, had planned. My leg was still in splints when General Annenkoff and I travelled from Tjardjui to the railhead near Bokhara on an open truck, on which a comfortable couch was fixed for me. We then chose a fine open site seven miles from the old town, as I had promised the late Amir. After that the building of the railway continued as rapidly as before, till at last the line crossed the Russian frontier and reached Samarkand on May 15/27, 1889.

This again was a great day to celebrate. General Annenkoff, whose sister was married to the distinguished French author and diplomat, Marquis Melchior de Vogué, had invited to Samarkand for the occasion not only de Vogué but also Baron Gustave de Rothschild, Colonel Niox, head of the Geographical Department of the French General Staff, Baron Constantin, a Parisian journalist, and several other foreign and Russian friends. A first-rate British newspaper correspondent named Dobson was also on the spot, and wrote soon after his interesting book, *Russian Railway Progress in Central Asia*. Annenkoff's work was really marvellous in the novelty of its conception and the economy

of its execution—for this was the cheapest railway Russia ever built. After Annenkov's death a monument was erected to his memory at the railway station of Samarkand. Among the Russian guests at the opening celebration was also Semenoff-Tianshansky, Vice-President of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society, who wrote an enthusiastic report on this achievement. Later this railway was continued to Tashkent and Orenburg, where it joined the railway system of European Russia. Branch lines too were built—one by the Russian Government, through the fertile cotton-growing valley of Ferghana to the Kashgar frontier, and one by the Amir, as already mentioned, to Karshi and Termez.

In consequence of all these events and changes the awakening of Central Asia advanced rapidly, but the unwonted stress of work that I had to bear under these circumstances was terrific. First I had to plan, not only the new city of Tjardjui, but also the other new towns of Bokhara and Kerki, and to devise for them laws embodying a mixed system of Russo-Bokharan self-government. My proposals were approved, and, besides my duties as Political Agent, I was invested with the rights and powers of Governor of these new settlements. At the same time I was made Magistrate for examining and judging all civil and criminal cases arising between Russians, and also between all other Christians having extra-territorial rights in the Khanate.

I remember one morning receiving a telegram from a railway station about sixty miles north of Bokhara, informing me of a railway accident in which six Persian workmen were killed and two Italian stonemasons were wounded. I left at once for the scene of the accident, and spent the whole day on the spot making a protocol of the particulars and taking the evidence of the wounded and witnesses. By nightfall I had done. But I had previously appointed 10 o'clock the following morning as the hour for a meeting of

the Russian subjects who had applied for building allotments in the new city of Bokhara, according to the plan which had been communicated to them. I could not possibly miss this appointment, which was to take place at the Political Agency in Old Bokhara, so, there being no engine at the station, I lay down, with my kit and my native interpreter, on a hand-trolley, and four native workmen with poles propelled me through the whole warm summer night to the station of Bokhara, where my carriage awaited me at 9 a.m. and brought me home just in time.

This was all very trying, and it lasted till an assistant was given me for criminal cases. Before I gave up the criminal work, however, I had to inquire into the murder of a Jewish jeweller in Tjardjui by two Caucasian outlaws. These I handed over to the military court of Samarkand, which had the right to apply the death penalty, whereas the ordinary Russian courts had not been allowed to do so since the days of Empress Elizabeth in the middle of the eighteenth century. The culprits were hanged in Tjardjui and this put a stop, once and for all, to murder and robbery among the Russians in the Khanate. The ensuing feeling of security proved most useful for the further development of trade.

Now let me tell how Bokhara became "dry". At all railway stations Russian law admits of restaurants and bars for the sale of spirituous liquors. My idea, however, was not to let the natives of Bokhara, who were strict abstainers under the Moslem Law, become contaminated by the influence of strong drink, to which the Russians were used. So I sent to the Foreign Office a draft law prohibiting the manufacture and sale of all kinds of intoxicating drinks in the Khanate of Bokhara, and forbidding the sale of such to all natives at the railway stations. The penalties for infringing the law were so strict that it would not pay to disobey. The head of the Excise Department in St. Peters-

burg was then Vladimir Kokovtzeff, whom I had known in the Lyceum, and who later became Minister of Finance and Prime Minister. He told me afterwards that when he reported on that draft to the Minister of Finance, Vishnigradsky, it was objected that such a law had never before been published in Russia. Kokovtzeff maintained, however, that in such exceptional cases the Government should show full confidence in the man on the spot, and not attempt to modify the laws which had been drafted there. This opinion prevailed. The law received the Imperial sanction, and remained, as far as I know, in force till the revolution of 1917, doing all the good which was expected from it.

In the summer of 1889 I had a nervous breakdown from overwork and from the malaria I had again contracted. I obtained two months' leave to go to the hills in Pendjakent, on the upper reach of the Zerafshan River, and from there made a most interesting expedition, with the local Chief of the District, a Mohammedan officer of Kirghiz origin, to Iskander Kul and the Zerafshan glaciers. The lake, which still bears the name of the great Macedonian, lies at an elevation of over 7,000 feet. A huge cleft through which the waters of the lake once poured is popularly attributed to the stroke of Alexander's sword. There is good pasture on the banks of the lake, and the local hill tribes believe that Alexander's horse Bucephalus, whom they call in Persian "Elephant-head" (*Serphil*), lives at the bottom of the lake. Sometimes he comes out to visit the neighbouring droves, with the result that a wonderful jumping foal is born. My companion, Kaultchanoff, Chief of the District, informed me that he had succeeded in buying such a foal some years before, but that it had died on its way to Orenburg.

From the lake we climbed the Mura Pass on horseback. It is 12,300 feet high, always covered with snow, and leads into the neighbouring Bokharan Province of Hissar. To

my great surprise, on the top of this pass I met a good acquaintance, Colonel Matveieff, Assistant Chief of Staff in Tashkent, who, accompanied by a few Cossacks, was making an excursion into that part of the Khanate. We were riding specially trained mountain horses, while Matveieff and his escort rode simple Cossack horses, which did this climbing perfectly well. A part of the way down led through a deep gorge, which reminded me of Doré's celebrated illustrations of Dante's *Inferno*. The gorge was overshadowed by immense perpendicular cliffs with eternal snow on their summit, where, at that moment, a thunderstorm was raging. On one of these summits is a cave, which Colonel Arendarenko, then Chief of the Samarkand District, had visited. In this cave he saw the body of an old man, seated with his back to the inner wall and dead for more than a thousand years. It is the corpse of a well-known Mohammedan saint, who was one of the first propagandists of Islam in Central Asia and had been forced by his persecutors to take refuge in that wellnigh inaccessible cave. Here the perpetual frost had perfectly preserved his remains. The access to him is so difficult that the Mohammedans believe it to be possible only for those who have no sins. Arendarenko managed to effect his entrance by being let down from the top of the cliff by means of ropes.

My excursion rested me but did not cure me, and I was granted sick-leave to consult the famous Professor Charcot in Paris. On my way thither I spent a couple of weeks in St. Petersburg, and was most cordially received at our Foreign Office. Zinovieff and the Minister obtained for me from the Emperor an exceptionally high decoration for my services in Bokhara, and I began my cure in Paris under the most favourable conditions, which allowed me also to appreciate fully the Exhibition held in Paris in 1889. At the end of a three months' cure Charcot advised me not to return to Central Asia, and as I had the feeling of having

accomplished there about as much as I was able, I asked to be appointed somewhere in Europe. Consequently, after a few months' time, which I spent as one of the higher employees of the Asiatic Department and in Bogdanovka, I was appointed First Secretary of our Embassy in Constantinople. With that appointment began for me a closer acquaintance with the Near East, followed by a career that included Berlin, Rome, and The Hague, until I became, in 1908, Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The years I spent in Central Asia injured my health but brought this one great moral benefit; they cured me of ambition. It was like the system of surfeit used with pastry-cooks' apprentices: they are allowed at the beginning to stuff themselves with sweets, until they soon become indifferent to them. The Russian system of education, with its competitive rewards, together with what I had seen of political life, had made me eager, not only to work, but also to acquire power and honours. Now no Ambassador, even in his old age, had the powers, the responsibilities, and the exceptional honours I enjoyed in Bokhara at the age of thirty. Thus I came to understand that honours are but the natural accompaniment of successful work and have no value in themselves; also, that power has to be bought at a price it is not worth, except as a condition of achievement.

*P A R T VI*

*BALKAN SCENES AND PROBLEMS*



## CONSTANTINOPLE

I have spent in the Balkans the greater part of the years during which I have lived abroad, as traveller, as diplomat, or (in the last decade) as exile. My first glimpse of Balkan lands was in 1865, when as a schoolboy I was taken by my father from Russia to Scotland, and on the banks of the Danube saw Turkish sentinels wearing their red fezes. The narrative has already told how as a youth I rode with my regiment from the Russian frontier through Rumania, across the Danube, and through Bulgaria as far as Philippopolis. Now I shall try to tell briefly something of what as a man I saw in Constantinople, Bulgaria, and Serbia.

Down to the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 the two centres of Balkan troubles and problems were Constantinople and Vienna. I saw this for myself soon after I had been appointed First Secretary of our Embassy in Constantinople in August 1890, and had travelled thither from Vienna, where I had joined my new chief, Ambassador Neldoff. Russia, after her military successes and diplomatic failures of 1877-8, had for a time drawn aloof from Balkan complications. She had even advised the Serbs, during the Berlin Congress, to "apply to Austria"—which they did with a vengeance under the evil guidance of Prince Milan Obrenovitch, who concluded with Austria the secret treaty of June 23, 1881, making him virtually a vassal of Vienna. And even with Bulgaria neither de Giers nor Zinovieff had been able to evolve for Russia a clear and rational policy, so that after many deplorable incidents she broke off all relations with Bulgaria in 1889, considering the election of Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha to the throne of Bulgaria as illegal. Thus the Vienna Cabinet appeared to have achieved success in pursuing its policy

of domination in the Balkans, and Russia seemed to have failed in her effort to make the Balkan peoples free.

As to Constantinople, where reigned at that time Sultan Abdul Hamid, the last despotic sovereign of Turkey, the three years I spent there showed me that all the Balkan States were looked upon by him with suspicion, and that all he aimed to do was to retard as much as possible the progressive disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. And this policy was endangered chiefly by the development and possible mutual friendship of Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece. The glimpses one had at that period into the life of the "Bloody Sultan" made it appear horrible. He was constantly haunted in his isolated Yildiz Palace by the fear of assassination—a fear studiously fostered by his numberless spies, and increased by the proximity of his brother Murad, whom he had dethroned, and of his heir apparent Reshad, whom he held in bondage. The principal objects of his fear and hatred, however, were the Armenians, who ceaselessly conspired against him and once nearly succeeded in killing him with a bomb.

Abdul Hamid's foreign policy was very astute. It aimed at keeping an even balance between the influences exercised by the several Great Powers in Constantinople. He paid German instructors to train his army, but he had a British Admiral, Woods Pasha, for the fleet which he always kept at anchor in the Golden Horn. He refused the offer of a Russian alliance made by Ambassador Neliboff, and Emperor Alexander III, speaking of the Sultan to me when I was leaving for Constantinople, called him "a wet hen". Neither did Abdul Hamid join the Triple Alliance, and it was only under the Young Turk revolutionists in 1914 that Turkey was induced to throw in her lot with Germany.

Abdul Hamid cared nothing, I believe, for his subjects, but only for his own power and riches. The Constitution he granted the Ottoman Empire was only a counter-stroke

to the administrative reforms for Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria proposed by the Constantinople Conference of 1876. He did his best to encourage Moslem fanaticism, and succeeded in building the Hejaz Railway to carry Moslem pilgrims from Damascus to Medina and Mecca. It was built exclusively with Islamic funds and by Mohammedan workmen, with the sole exception of the Chief Engineer, who was a German.

My sojourn as Secretary in Constantinople coincided with the most brilliant period of his reign. But he could not stem the growing influence of foreign diplomats and capitalists in Turkey, and when he saw himself obliged to introduce serious reforms in Macedonia, the revolution he had always feared flamed up and destroyed him. For me this sojourn became the happiest turning-point of my personal life. In Constantinople in September 1893 I married Mlle Vera Ivanoff, daughter of Privy Councillor I. A. Ivanoff, the distinguished linguist, who later became Head of the School of Oriental Languages of the Foreign Office. He had been on the staff of Emperor Alexander II in Bulgaria as Chief Interpreter, and was Governor of Adrianople during the Russian occupation. Then he remained for many years First Dragoman of our Embassy in Turkey. For my bride Constantinople was full of pleasant associations, and thither we always went from our other posts for rest and leisure; and here we have found shelter and work since the Bolshevik Revolution.

## BULGARIA

It fell to my lot, after being transferred in 1893 from Constantinople to Berlin as Councillor of the Embassy there, to be entrusted with the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Bulgaria, which had been interrupted for nine years after the election of Prince Ferdinand to the Bulgarian Throne. With the death of Alexander III in 1894, and that of de Giers, Prince Lobanoff, who succeeded to the Foreign Office under Nicholas II, advised the resumption of diplomatic intercourse with Bulgaria. This little State had sent a deputation with a wreath for the tomb of the late Emperor, and was suffering greatly from the impossible situation in which she was placed through Russia's refusal to recognize Ferdinand as her ruler. The Prince, married to the charming Princess of Bourbon-Parma, Marie Louise, had already two sons and a daughter, who were all Roman Catholics. Now, according to the Bulgarian Constitution, the second Prince of Bulgaria should belong to the Greek Orthodox Church—the Church of his people. So, when the Prince agreed that his eldest son, Boris, should be received into the Greek Orthodox Church, the last obstacle to Russian recognition was removed.

While the Emperor's General Aide-de-Camp, Count Goleniostcheff-Koutouzoff, was sent to Sofia to represent the Emperor at the solemn religious ceremony, I was ordered to proceed there as Russian Diplomatic Agent. On February 2/14, 1896, I entered the Prince's Palace in full Court uniform, and handed him a letter announcing my appointment. This, I believe, must have been the happiest day of Prince Ferdinand's life because by this one act he secured recognition also by his suzerain, the Sultan, and by all the other Great

and Small Powers of the world. Up to that date, whenever a foreign diplomat was invited to the Palace, he hesitated about putting even the ribbon of a decoration in his button-hole, fearing lest this might be considered too official !

The Bulgarian Court was small, but admirably organized on the French model, Prince Ferdinand being fond of saying, “*Mon grandpère le Roi*”—his maternal grandfather being Louis Philippe, King of France. Princess Marie Louise was then absent in Nice, as, being a devout Roman Catholic, she preferred avoiding the Orthodox Church solemnities ; but when she came back she was most kind to me and my wife. And when she died soon after in giving birth to a daughter, she left with those who had been privileged to approach her the memory of a Princess of whom her adopted country could be rightly fond and justly proud.

The reports on the situation in Bulgaria which I brought with me to St. Petersburg were approved by the Minister and by the Emperor. The Prince’s wish to be received by the Emperor in St. Petersburg was granted, and the relations of Russia and Bulgaria continued for fifteen years with unvarying amity and smoothness till the second Balkan War of 1913, when Bulgaria, tempted by Austria-Hungary, attacked her Balkan allies, Serbia and Greece, in spite of Russia’s admonitions, and was soundly thrashed for her pains. During all this period the Imperial Government abstained from meddling in any way with Bulgarian internal affairs, and all Bulgarians, without distinction of party, were received on an equal footing at the Russian Diplomatic Agency. It was then that the principle of “the Balkans for the Balkan peoples” was first mooted, I believe, in one of my dispatches, and came to be accepted as the fundamental and unvarying expression of Russia’s policy in the Balkans.

I was in Sofia when young King Alexander of Serbia paid his first visit to Prince Ferdinand. I remember how Princess Marie Louise, being at some loss as to how to amuse her

guest, suggested that the amateur theatraclals which we had recently introduced at the Diplomatic Agency should be repeated at the Palace. This was most successfully done. The little Prince Boris, who is now King of the Bulgars, was then a bright boy, who already knew the names of the regiments which passed before him in review. Fifteen years later, when he and his brother Cyril visited Constantinople with a tutor on a voyage of instruction through Turkey, they came to see us at the Embassy. Boris had grown a tall, thin youth, very strictly brought up by his father. And now, since the abdication of Tzar Ferdinand, who during the Great War "backed the wrong horse", Boris is making a good and popular national sovereign.

The greatest difficulty for emancipated Bulgaria lay in her relations with Serbia. Both countries had been freed by Russian help, and Russia naturally wished them to be, not only free, but also good and friendly neighbours to each other. In the beginning this was so, and at the time when Prince Michael reigned in Serbia in the eighteen-sixties the idea was often expressed that both peoples might unite under his sceptre, both alike possessing the Slavonic culture and belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church. This idea is not quite dead even now. But when an autonomous Government was instituted in Sofia, and especially after the Principality of Bulgaria had joined to itself the Bulgarian province of Eastern Rumelia in 1885, Serbia was incited by Vienna to strive for territorial compensations, and marched on Sofia with an admirably organized military force, which the Austrians called in those days their "13th Army Corps". Bulgaria was utterly unprepared for this attack, but nevertheless her troops repulsed the Serbian onslaught, and would have advanced on Belgrade had not the Austro-Hungarian military agent in Serbia, Count Khevenhüller, whom I knew later as Ambassador in Paris, declared that Austria would intervene. Thus the Austro-Hungarian military

undertaking failed, but the naturally fraternal feelings between Bulgarians and Serbians were destroyed, and when I arrived in Sofia nine years later I still found the greatest difficulty in mitigating the evil effects of this Serbian adventure. After eighteen months I was promoted to the post of Minister-Resident at the Papal Court in Rome, and for a time was absent from the Balkans, but in 1900 I was once more accredited to a Balkan State, being appointed Minister Plenipotentiary in Belgrade.

## SERBIA

When I arrived in Belgrade in the spring of 1901, it was in the heyday of renewed Russo-Serbian friendship, as a consequence of the love-match of King Alexander with Madame Draga, widow of a Serbian engineer and former Lady-in-Waiting to the King's mother. At this marriage the Emperor, who was the King's godfather, was officially represented by the Russian Chargé d'Affaires, Mansouroff, who handed the bride and bridegroom the Imperial presents. The King's father Milan, who on abdicating some years earlier had burdened his son with the terrible weight of his own mistakes and misdeeds, had recently died in Vienna and left the young King to act on his own account.

Alexander's most important step was his refusal to renew his father's secret treaty with Austria-Hungary, which, as I have already mentioned, expired in 1895. This allowed him to choose his Ministers from among the popular "Radical Party", which stood for Serbian independence and for good relations with Russia. This disposition coincided perfectly with that of my Government, and my work in Belgrade began under the most favourable auspices. But, quite unexpectedly, a most delicate problem arose in connection with the visit which the King and Queen wished to make to the Court of St. Petersburg. After all the gracious kindness which the Emperor had shown King Alexander on the occasion of his marriage, this wish was so natural that I had no hesitation in telegraphing it to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Lamsdorff, and was in no wise surprised on receiving from the latter an official answer informing me of His Majesty's acquiescence in this visit.

I think that, with the exception of my service in Bokhara, I never worked so hard as I did in Belgrade. For, after long

years of Austrian predominance and Russian aloofness, so much had to be done to re-establish cordial relations, to improve those between Serbia and Bulgaria, to develop our navigation on the Danube in conjunction with that of Serbia, to prepare for the construction of the "Adriatic Railway", which should join the Danube to the Adriatic through Serbia and Montenegro, to study the possibility of growing cotton in South Serbia, and to help, as much as possible, Serbia's renaissance to an economic independence. With some of these aims in view I made a most interesting journey with my wife down the Danube to Radouevatz on the Serbo-Bulgarian frontier, and thence by carriage to Nish along the probable course of the Adriatic Railway. No Russian Minister had ever been seen in those parts, and the inhabitants accorded us a glorious welcome, decorating with flowers the bridges and villages we passed on our way and offering us a banquet in Negotin, famous for its wine. On our way back I visited the "Russian Redoubt", so-called because on the spot a Russian army detachment had beaten the Turks when fighting for the liberation of Serbia as far back as 1809.

On my return to Belgrade I noticed that the King and Queen were becoming anxious about the date on which they would be received in St. Petersburg, and when I transmitted this question to Count Lamsdorff I was surprised at receiving dilatory answers. Some unexpected difficulty had evidently been raised at the Russian Court on this subject. There was no doubt that this difficulty was not of a political nature, but could be traced to irresponsible feminine influences directed against Queen Draga. Yet the political importance of a refusal to receive the King and Queen of Serbia at the Court of St. Petersburg was so great that I did not hesitate to write again and again to Lamsdorff, telling him that in this case a breach would inevitably result between King Alexander and his people and endanger the peace of Serbia.

Towards the end of 1902 the internal situation of Serbia had become so dangerous, in consequence of King Alexander having entered resolutely upon a reactionary policy, that Lamsdorff found it necessary to pay a personal visit to Serbia, to see for himself what the situation was. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs arrived in Belgrade on December 10th/23rd, stayed at our Legation, listened to my detailed verbal reports, and went to see King Alexander and Queen Draga in Nish, accompanied by our First Secretary, because I was at the time very ill in bed. After the audience he continued his journey to Sofia, but I learned from Mouravieff, the Secretary, that his impression of Queen Draga was not favourable. When the Minister passed once more through Belgrade, without stopping, on his way back to St. Petersburg, Mouravieff, who saw him off, transmitted to me the Minister's final order "not to meddle with the internal affairs of Serbia", but to take care that its foreign policy continued to be in complete harmony with that of Russia.

Lamsdorff did not know, nor did I, that this order was the death-warrant of King Alexander and Queen Draga. As a matter of fact, the evident refusal to see them in St. Petersburg had already destroyed their prestige among the Serbian people. Then the new Constitution which the King had autocratically introduced, and by which the complete subservience of both Houses of the new Parliament to the Crown was secured, made everyone fear some new and dangerous legislative measure—notably, the proclamation of Queen Draga's brother as heir apparent to the throne, since by that time children were no longer hoped for by the Royal couple. This young Lounevitza was merely a third-rate officer in the Serbian Army. Some of my Serbian friends ventured to call my most serious attention to these menacing complications, begging me to persuade the King to change his internal policy, which was becoming most dangerous

for him. Signs of growing unrest and of approaching attempts on the King's life became more and more frequent. All I could do, however, was to telegraph and write all this to the Minister, and, according to my instructions, to abstain from any kind of "meddling with the internal affairs of Serbia".

During the night of May 29/11 June, 1903, the anniversary of Prince Michael's assassination in 1867, the storm broke. At about 2 a.m. the Old Palace, in which the King and Queen resided and which is just opposite the Russian Legation, was surrounded by two regiments of Serbian infantry, which had been brought there under the pretext of protecting the King against an attempt on his life. In command of them were men belonging to the military conspiracy of seventy Army officers, who had sworn to fire each a shot at the King and Queen, so that all should be equally implicated. A dynamite cartridge, stolen a few days before from a military depot, was used to blow open the iron door leading to the King's private apartments. As the electric lights had gone out, the conspirators searched the rooms of the Palace with lighted candles, but for a couple of hours could find neither the King nor the Queen. The King's favourite aide-de-camp, hoping that Their Majesties would manage to escape, led the conspirators a wild-goose chase through the Palace, and was shot by them as soon as his intention of misleading them was found out. Suddenly a window was opened in the lower story of the Palace facing the street, and we heard the Queen's voice calling to the soldiers outside for help. We also heard one of them answer, "Fear nothing, Majesty." This showed the conspirators where the Royal couple had taken refuge. It was a small room next to their bedroom. The conspirators rushed in and shot down the King, who had no arms and was standing in front of the Queen to shield her with his body. The Queen was also shot, and then horribly mutilated by the swords

of the conspirators. About an hour later the same window was opened again, and the bodies of the King and the Queen, wrapped in the window-curtains, were thrown out into the garden. As soon as the murder was perpetrated, officers holding smoking revolvers hurried out, and I heard the soldiers shout, "Long live King Karageorgevitch!"—the head of the rival Serbian dynasty, who was then living in exile in Switzerland.

By daylight a national provisional Government was formed, which announced to the people and to the Diplomatic Corps that the last *Skupština* (Parliament) was summoned to convene and elect a new king for Serbia, in view of the demise of King Alexander and Queen Draga without progeny. At about nine o'clock the same morning all the Ministers accredited in Belgrade assembled at the Russian Legation, and all were agreed to abstain from any interference and to await the decision of the *Skupština*, meanwhile entering into only current business relations with the provisional Government. The capital and the whole of Serbia remained perfectly quiet, soldiers were seen with sprigs of green on their caps, and there was a common feeling as of relief from an impending general catastrophe. It appears that in the same night detachments of soldiers had also shot the Prime Minister, General Tzintzar Markovitch, the Minister of War, the two brothers of Queen Draga, and some others identified with the reactionary Government.

I do not believe that under the prevailing circumstances even my personal intervention as the representative of Russia could have saved the lives of the Royal couple. The conspirators would not have been satisfied with their mere abdication, for the hatred and distrust which they had bred had become far too strong. My duty was to obey to the end the orders I had received, and to safeguard the interests of my country, leaving all responsibility to Count Lamsdorff. My attitude in this crisis was approved by my

Government. When a few days later King Peter Karageorgevitch was duly elected to the vacant Serbian Throne and soon arrived in Belgrade, I and the Austro-Hungarian Plenipotentiary were the first to present our credentials to His Majesty. But I was ordered to leave Belgrade before the King's name-day, which was to be celebrated on June 29th (o.s.), taking advantage of the leave of absence which had already been granted me and accrediting Mouravieff as *Chargé d'Affaires*. It was inadvisable for my Government and inadmissible for me personally that I should meet in the Palace the murderers of King Alexander and Queen Draga, who had become the leading officers of the new reign and whose removal was being demanded by the Powers. My leave was indefinitely prolonged. I spent about a year and a half resting in Rumania, until in April 1905 I was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary at The Hague.

Russian interests in Serbia did not suffer from this change of dynasty. King Peter was a sincere friend of Russia, and had the unanimous support of the great Serbian popular peasant party, the "Radicals", who fully shared this feeling, while the principle of "the Balkans for the Balkan peoples" gave ample room for the further political and cultural growth of the Serbian kingdom. This was soon to be proved by the results of the annexation crisis of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, by the territorial aggrandizement of Serbia in the direction of Macedonia as a consequence of the Balkan alliance and war with Turkey in 1912, and by the creation of the great Kingdom of Yugoslavia after the Great War.

In St. Petersburg I had the honour of being presented to young Prince Alexander, second son of King Peter, now the forceful ruler of Yugoslavia. He was then living in the Emperor's Winter Palace and studying with a first-rate Russian tutor. His elder brother, George, who was heir apparent to the throne of Serbia, had been allowed by the

Emperor, on my favourable report on the subject, to come to St. Petersburg during the crisis of 1908, and I believe this mark of Russian good will helped Serbia to weather without war the dangers to which she had been exposed by the encroaching policy and the intrigues of the Vienna Cabinet.

## CHAPTER XXVII

## THE PROBLEM OF BALKAN FEDERATION

The corollary to the principle of "the Balkans for the Balkan peoples" is that *these peoples should unite to assure and defend their common Balkan interests*. This seemed impossible of attainment as long as Austria-Hungary existed, for she numbered among her subjects about one-half of the Serbian people, and by all possible means promoted resentment and hatred between the kingdoms of Serbia and Bulgaria. Nevertheless, the idea of a common defence for common interests spread naturally among the Balkan peoples, and it at length took the form of an alliance between Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece, when the hour had struck for freeing Macedonia from the Turks in 1912. A couple of years before that date, as Ambassador in Constantinople, I had put forward a more ample plan of Balkan federation, including Turkey and headed by her, which would secure the Balkans from any further Austro-Hungarian encroachment. Official visits to Constantinople by the Kings of Bulgaria and Serbia, accompanied by their Ministers for Foreign Affairs, had served at that time as a practical introduction to some such union. But the Young Turk Government was unable or unwilling to appreciate the importance of Balkan federation. Turkey had to pay for this fatuity on the battlefields of 1912 and those of the Great War.

Under the new post-war conditions this problem of federation has sprung up again, though in the mitigated form of a "Balkan Locarno", and the treaties which Turkey is now concluding with some of her neighbours, beginning with Bulgaria but destined to include even Greece, shows the increasing need for intra-Balkan agreements. The Great War has most unfortunately added some new causes of dissension to those—already numerous enough—which

existed earlier between the Balkan States. Thus the problem of securing for Serbia a commercial outlet through Salonika, and one for Bulgaria through Dedeaghatch, to the Eastern Mediterranean, will require patient efforts on all sides to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. Again, the total expulsion of Bulgaria from Macedonia, where she had been an important and even dominant factor for the preceding fifty years, gives rise to a difficulty which seems almost insuperable. Lastly, the annexation of the whole of the Dobrudja to Rumania creates an almost intolerable situation for those Bulgarians who continue to look upon the Dobrudja as their home. The existence of the League of Nations, with its right by peaceful means to introduce necessary changes into treaties which have become inapplicable, allows the friends of peace some hope for such a satisfactory settlement of these and other similar difficulties as would bring a Balkan Locarno, or even a Balkan federation, within the scope of practical politics.

Unfortunately a new element of danger for peace and unity in the Balkans seems now to be looming on the horizon of the Near East, since Imperialist Italy seems willing to step into Austria-Hungary's shoes, either to continue her policy of expansion or to become the arbiter of the Balkans. Albania, which Austria-Hungary formerly did its best to master, has now become openly an Italian protectorate, and thus gives to Italy an advantageous strategical footing on the frontiers of both Yugoslavia and Greece. Mussolini makes no secret of his wish to renew the old Venetian policy of commercial penetration in the Near East, and his sudden occupation of Corfu not many years ago showed him to be intent on making the Adriatic an Italian lake. Austria-Hungary's plans of aggrandizement in the Near East were seconded by a powerful Germany. Italy has no such second. On the contrary, she has rivals in the Mediterranean, such as France and Greece. The Fascist policy is very

outspoken as to its aims, but very prudent and able in the means employed for attaining them. The purely military value of the Italian Army, as demonstrated during the Great War, hardly comes up to the standard of Serbian, Bulgarian, and Turkish troops. In the meanwhile the idea of Balkan *rapprochement* will continue making its way quietly in the hearts of the Balkan peoples, and there is good ground for hope that some day, thanks to an appropriate federal system, the Balkans will not only cease to be the classic storm-centre of Eastern Europe, but become a peaceful and useful member of the community of civilized nations.



**P A R T   V I I**

***SOME DIPLOMATIC INTERLUDES***



## CHAPTER XXVIII

THE RUSSIAN EMBASSIES IN BERLIN AND  
LONDON IN 1881

Here are some episodes I like to remember, which put me in touch with some very dissimilar forms of diplomatic life and work. The earliest of these reminiscences are those concerned with the Russian Embassies I visited in the beginning of 1881 as Secretary, carrying dispatches from Prince Gortchakoff to our Ambassadors, Sabouroff, and Prince Lobanoff-Rostovsky.

Ambassador Sabouroff was a man of exceptional gifts and talents. He was a former pupil and gold-medallist of the Imperial Alexander Lyceum and made his mark as Minister Plenipotentiary in Athens. There, for some private reason, he had had to fight a duel. Of course, he had to write to the Chancellor, Prince Gortchakoff, to inform him of this occurrence, which might easily have had the gravest consequences for his further diplomatic career. He wrote (as was then the custom, in French), "Je sais qu'un diplomate qui se bat est comme un soldat qui ne se bat pas", and Gortchakoff, who liked clever men and witty phrases, granted him a free pardon.

Sabouroff was well aware of the strained relations existing between Russia and Germany after the Berlin Congress, and managed to meet Bismarck, accidentally of course, at a German watering-place in the summer of 1880. Bismarck, who also liked clever men, was pleased and interested in listening to Sabouroff's plan for re-establishing Russo-German friendship. So Sabouroff was soon appointed Ambassador in Berlin, and when I saw him on my arrival there he was busy negotiating, with the utmost secrecy, the treaty between Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary which was signed in Berlin on June 15/27, 1881. This

negotiation was so secret that only one of his secretaries, who happened to be the eldest son of de Giers, was acquainted with it, while in St. Petersburg the Minister alone opened such of Sabouroff's letters as were addressed with his own hand. This excellent treaty was renewed by all three Powers in 1884 for three further years, and secured the peace of Europe till 1890, when Bismarck's forced retirement prevented its renewal and drove Russia into an alliance with France.

Sabouroff asked me to stay at the Embassy, and there we had long and interesting talks. In the evening he took me to a party at the house of Arapoff, Councillor of the Embassy, where I first saw what diplomatic life abroad was like. I learned later that Sabouroff asked de Giers to appoint me Second Secretary at his Embassy. I do not know why the Minister refused, nor did I then guess that I was to become Councillor of this Embassy twelve years later.

Continuing my journey, I stopped in Paris only long enough to hand over my dispatches, and arrived on the same day in London. Prince Lobanoff-Rostovsky, who was also a former pupil and gold-medallist of the same Lyceum, offered me the hospitality of his Embassy and retained me for some time as temporary Attaché. The dispatches I brought him and those I carried back were principally concerned with the recent capture by General Skobeleff of the Turkoman fortress of Gueoktepe, which was then exercising Gladstone's Government and British public opinion. I have already told how this feat of arms led to the ultimate annexation of Merv and to the establishment of a complete Russo-British Central Asian agreement.

I had a good time in London attending various social functions, at one of which I saw the stout Princess of Teck, mother of the present Queen, and of course I visited the Houses of Parliament, which were then in session. By a stroke of good luck I witnessed that famous sitting of the

House of Commons which lasted from Monday afternoon till Wednesday morning, and in which Parnell, "the uncrowned King of Ireland", tried to stultify the British parliamentary system by prolonging indefinitely a debate on a paltry question of Irish police, in the hope of obliging Parliament to adopt Home Rule for Ireland. On Monday afternoon I saw the beginning of what was expected to be an all-night sitting. When on Tuesday evening I entered the gallery after the theatre, I witnessed an extraordinary scene. An Irish member was speaking against time, to prevent the question being put, while, by agreement between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, a sufficient number of members was present to prevent the House being counted out. Some were stretched on the benches fast asleep, others were reading the papers, others writing letters, and only the Speaker listened to the Irish orator, reminding him to keep to the question and not to repeat himself. Punctually at midnight Mr. Parnell and six Home Rulers entered the House and were greeted with loud Irish applause. But the British Parliament was not to be fooled or threatened into submission, and, as is well known, the Speaker, at 9 a.m. of the third day of the sitting, put the question and asked the House to approve of this proceeding. Gladstone immediately introduced a Bill making such a form of procedure legal, and thus began the system of "closure", which until then had been unknown in the annals of British parliamentary life, but which could no longer be dispensed with. I heard the "Grand Old Man" make a few remarks in the course of the debate. This whole incident helped to increase my admiration for parliamentary government as practised in Great Britain.

## CHAPTER XXIX

## CAIRO IN 1892

The diplomatic situation in Egypt, when on account of Koyander's illness I was sent there in June 1892 as *Charge d'Affaires*, was very different from that of to-day. British troops had already been in occupation for some time—an occupation which, despite Gladstone's reiterated declarations, seemed likely to be indefinitely prolonged. But the security and permanence of British domination in Egypt were seriously handicapped by two weighty adverse forces. The Mahdist revolt was still at its height, with the power of the Dervishes stretching as far down the Nile as Wady Halfa. And France was overtly hostile to Great Britain in Africa, so that at this precise moment a French detachment under Captain Marchand was marching on Fashoda on the Upper Nile, with the intention of extending French dominion from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, and thus cutting across the "Cape to Cairo" line that Britain was already planning. At the same time in Cairo young Abbas had succeeded his father Tewfik as Khedive, and found himself practically under the tutelage of those British Under-Secretaries of State who were nominally the assistants of his official native Ministers, but were really ruled by the genius of Lord Cromer. This remarkable statesman had officially only the status of British Consul-General in Cairo, although both before and after his elevation to the Peerage he was *de facto* the ruler and creator of Modern Egypt.

My duty was to carry out in Egypt the new Russian foreign policy of alliance with France, and I willingly set myself to assist, in so far as I could, the French diplomatic representative, Marquis de Reverseau, who later became a notable Ambassador in Madrid and Vienna.

The administration of the Egyptian Public Debt gave

Russia and France a good opportunity to act together. The Anglo-Egyptian Government was intent, even then, on developing the irrigation system of the Nile Valley. This scheme required much money, and many millions in gold were then lying idle in the Public Debt; but they could be spent only with the consent of all the delegates, among whom were those of Russia and France. Both refused their consent, and nothing could be done till many years later, when in 1904 an understanding was reached by France and England on the basis of a free hand for France in Morocco and the same for Great Britain in Egypt. Then Russia followed the example of her French ally, and the foundation of the Triple Entente was laid.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE VATICAN AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE KING OF ITALY. POPE LEO XIII AND A CANDIDATE TO SUCCEED HIM (1898-1900)

While I was working in Central Asia my friend and school-fellow, Isvolsky, was busy in Rome, giving eight years of his life to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and the Holy See, which had been broken off in connection with the Polish insurrection against Russia in 1863. This was an almost hopeless task, in which many Russian diplomats had already failed, and Isvolsky's success was perhaps due chiefly to the political wisdom and broad-mindedness of Leo XIII, one of the greatest statesmen who ever wore the Papal Tiara. When I paid Isvolsky a visit in Rome he was still far from achieving success, and when he heard of what was going on in Bokhara he said wistfully, "You can see the fruits of your labours, but I cannot see the fruits of mine." He was, however, soon to see them, and was himself appointed in 1894 first Minister-Resident to the Papal Court, where, in the spring of 1897, I succeeded him.

I remember that when driving for the first time to the Vatican through the multi-coloured and gay Italian crowd it occurred to me that all these men, women, and children were happy in knowing that there was there, just above them, a very old and kind-hearted man who was thinking for them, praying for them, taking on himself their faults and sins, and demanding from them in exchange only one thing: obedience. Such is human nature. Liberty and independence of act and mind are aspirations of the few. The great majority are glad to shirk responsibility. I remember how glad I myself was during the campaign in Bulgaria to renounce my free will and to find solace and comfort in simple military obedience. It is these human heartstrings

that are touched by the masterly kindness of the Roman Catholic Church, and in Russia twenty-three millions (mostly in Poland) benefited by the friendly agreement between the Tzar and the Pope. From that time on a Roman Catholic Primate, the Archbishop of Moghilev, could again be legally appointed, and bishops and priests were again able to carry on their ministry among the highest and humblest of their flock.

My principal work was to establish an understanding between the Imperial and the Pontifical Governments concerning the choice of candidates for various ecclesiastical functions, and in Leo's famous Secretary of State, Cardinal Rampolla, I found the personification of that patient ability which has made the diplomacy of the Vatican the first in the world. I have observed that to arrive at a satisfactory result in any ordinary negotiation it is very useful to appeal to some general principle on which both sides are agreed and which would cover a given case. In negotiating with the Vatican one must, on the contrary, studiously avoid touching on any general principle, because in that domain no discussion is possible. If, however, one takes up a particular case, one may hope to arrive at a definite understanding and a practical solution of some question which, on principle, would be insoluble.

A marvellous illustration of this peculiarity in Roman diplomacy was afforded through the co-existence in the city of Rome, after 1870, of two sovereigns, the Pope and the King of Italy, who were openly enemies and had no relations—diplomatic or otherwise—with each other: the King had been anathematized and excommunicated by the Pope, and the Pope had become, as he said, “a prisoner in the Vatican”. During my stay in Rome this extraordinary situation was at its worst. Pope Leo XIII had proved in skilful public utterances that Temporal Power was absolutely necessary for the Pope as the head of

the universal Roman Catholic Church. Consequently, the Italian "Law of Guarantees", which granted the Pope certain sovereign rights and privileges, together with a considerable cash allowance, continued to be absolutely rejected by the Holy See, and no Catholics were allowed even to take part in the political life of the Italian State. The Pope's Court and all the diplomats accredited to it formed the so-called "Black Society" of Rome and held no intercourse with the "White Society", which was grouped around the Quirinal, the Palace of the King. Thus I could not visit or receive, officially, even my former chief Nelidoff, then Ambassador to the King of Italy. On the other hand, when the King or Pope happened to fall ill, inquiries were always made from the Quirinal or the Vatican, as the case might be, by telephone or word of mouth—never in writing—and, of course, quite privately. This abnormal situation seems to have lasted quite long enough, and as I write, news comes from Rome to the effect that a supreme *combinazione* has been patiently worked out by Mussolini and the present Pope, which secures for the latter the temporal power of an independent sovereign, and will procure for Italian Fascism the whole-hearted support of the Roman Catholic Church and its adherents. For the Imperial Russian Government the Pope of Rome never ceased to be a temporal sovereign in spite of the events of 1870. And the letter from Emperor Nicholas II to the Pope accrediting me to him began with the words "Sovereign Pope".

The three years spent by my wife and me in Rome were the pleasantest of my diplomatic career. We enjoyed in full the unique sights of Rome and its environs, lived a whole summer in Sorrento, and travelled a good deal about Italy. The excavations in the Roman Forum were then progressing rapidly, and I owe to one of the monuments there unearthed some of the deepest impressions of my life. In the Forum, at the foot of the Temple of Castor and Pollux, was dis-

covered a small, humble, low-ceilinged, rectangular Christian Church of the eighth century, called Santa Maria Antica, with the name of Pope John VII inscribed on a marble column inside it. The title of Pope is in no way reserved to the Bishop of Rome, for it belongs equally to the Patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria. And the Bishops of Rome were, in those days, usually appointed by the Byzantine Exarch of Ravenna, who governed Italy in the name of the Emperor at Constantinople, Rome having become nothing but a small provincial town of semi-barbaric Italy. At that time the whole Christian Church was one and the same, in the East and in the West, as may be seen by the Ikons and the frescoes found inside this basilica of St. Mary, which are exactly like those in many small churches in the Near East and Russia to-day. And when I came out of this church, whose aspect had taken me back a thousand years and many thousands of miles from Modern Rome, and beheld before me the Renaissance architecture of St. Peter's and other similar churches, I had a vivid impression of the change which had been worked in the West, while the Eastern Church had remained the same as in the days of the great Ecumenical Councils.

This brings me to the end of that evolution which had begun in my inner life when I was still at school, and of which I have spoken in a preceding chapter. In the intervals of political work I continued reading philosophy, and when I became acquainted with the *System of Positive Philosophy* of Auguste Comte in the original, I soon realized that his ideas had been entirely misunderstood or misrepresented by Pissareff. What struck me most in this system was Comte's acknowledgment of the organic limitations of knowledge as accessible to mankind. I began working on this theme for my own instruction, and ended by writing, after many years, a book on *The Limits of Human Thought*. This work has not found a publisher, as not likely to be "a good seller", although

it was read and approved by the distinguished Scottish philosopher, Dr. Patterson. But it instilled in me a deep feeling of humility, and of gratitude for those glimpses of Truth which man has been allowed to see, as "through a glass darkly", by the medium of religion; and when I compared the elaborate structure of the Roman Catholic Church, as I saw it in Rome herself, with the primitive simplicity of the Greek Orthodox Church, my sympathy and faith went back to the Confession of my fathers. I also learned gradually to look upon death in old age as a welcome rest after a life of work and trouble. I felt this when I was being led off to be shot by the mutinied Bolshevik sailors in Sebastopol in 1919; and even the pain and agony which may in some cases accompany death seem to me but the just counterpart of what I myself may have imposed during my life on others.

The political work of Pope Leo XIII was as fruitful as it was important, and one could observe from the Vatican Hill all that was going on in the whole world. A congress was held of all the bishops of what then began to be termed "Latin America", about which Sazonoff, then Secretary of our Legation, wrote a very good article that was published among our Russian Consular Reports above my signature. As our alliance with France was then an accomplished fact, the French Embassy and I succeeded in helping to put an end to the distressing troubles and even fights between Greek Orthodox and Latin monks in the Holy Land, by instructing the local Russian and French consuls to come to a practical agreement on the subject on the basis of the *status quo*. While I was in Rome the Grand Duke Michael Nikolaevitch spent a winter there, as did his daughter Anastasia, wife of the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. I had the honour of accompanying each of them to the Pope, and witnessed the wonderful charm which Leo XIII exercised on all those who approached him.

When he received me in audience, as often happened, he spoke rather indifferent French, but with the vigour, the gestures, and the piercing black eyes of a young Italian, although he was then nearing his ninetieth year. He liked to recall his sojourn in Brussels as Pontifical Nuncio before being appointed to a bishopric in Italy. He wrote and published wonderful Latin verse, which can certainly be likened to that of Horace, but dealt, of course, only with religious themes. He opened the Vatican Archives to the historians of all nations, and I have spent there many an interesting hour. The great political eminence of Leo XIII made it extremely desirable, especially for France and Russia, that, when his life was ended, he should find a similarly minded successor. On talking this question over with the French Ambassador, Nisard, it was quite natural that the best of all candidatures should appear to be that of Cardinal Rampolla, the eminent Secretary of State. My Government and that of France fully approved of this candidature, and on me fell the delicate task of informing him of this idea. He listened to it with an impassive countenance. Happily for myself, I had been transferred from Rome to Belgrade in September 1900, before the death of Leo XIII. For though at the Conclave of 1903 Rampolla came to be duly elected, the adversaries of his Russophile and Francophile policy obtained the support of Austria-Hungary, whose representative declared a veto, which, though not officially recognized by the Conclave, made Rampolla's accession to the Pontifical throne impossible.

I should like before turning the page to set down one more Roman recollection. Some foreign representatives, including the French Ambassador and myself, were once waiting for the Cardinal Secretary of State to begin his weekly reception, when an old Cardinal came out of Rampolla's study and entered into a friendly conversation with Nisard concerning the expected canonization of Joan of Arc. "We are advancing

this question", said the Cardinal, "as expeditiously as possible and certainly it will be decided in about fifteen years." Now the speaker was perfectly aware that by that time neither he nor Pope Leo XIII, nor most of the men there present, would be alive. Yet he was as absolutely certain that what he said would happen as if it was to take place in a few days. Herein lies the strength of the Roman Catholic Church: *patiens quia eterna*—patient because eternal—is its conviction. Because of the Church's wonderfully perfect organization, fifteen—or fifty—years are for it as nothing. That is the way in which the Papacy has been able to wait from 1870 till 1929 for the recognition by Italy of its Temporal Power, and Joan of Arc was duly canonized—even somewhat earlier than the Cardinal had anticipated!

## THE SECOND HAGUE PEACE CONFERENCE OF 1907

At the time when I was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to Holland in the spring of 1905 the idea of holding at The Hague a second Peace Conference, which, like that of 1899, was to be convoked by the Tzar, was already being discussed in Europe and America, the general desire being not to let the interesting and useful experiment of 1899 remain an isolated and incomplete international undertaking.

When I was received by Emperor Nicholas II before leaving for The Hague, I was somewhat surprised to hear him speak of the expected Conference without much enthusiasm. I came to know later that his aim in starting the first Conference was to enable Russia to avoid an impending increase of her artillery in view of the re-armament of Austria-Hungary in this branch. But German opposition to any practical scheme of disarmament prevented serious measures along this line from being adopted, and it seemed improbable that a second Conference could deal more successfully with any scheme for the limitation of armaments. This proved to be the case. But in the meantime the summoning of the Second Hague Conference had to be put off till the war with Japan, into which Russia had plunged through the fault of her own Government, was over. And thus it was only two years later that the Conference met. Its work belongs to history, so I need only speak of some salient traits of this gathering and of certain points of similarity or difference between the attributions and proceedings of the Hague Peace Conference and those of its younger successor, the League of Nations.

In 1907 the German Government, being, as we now know, bent on preparing for a great war, ruled out, absolutely, any attempt at a serious limitation of armaments. Some

progress was made in the matter of the establishment of a Permanent Court of International Justice and of an international Naval Prize Court. The most important result related, however, to questions of navigation and naval warfare, such questions having been raised in an urgent form by the recent Russo-Japanese War, and particularly by the circumstances under which Admiral Rojdestvensky's squadron had to sail from the Russian port of Kronstadt on the Baltic to the Sea of Japan. Great Britain, as an ally of Japan, had put the greatest difficulties possible in the way of this cruise, while France, as an ally of Russia, did her best to speed it. No definite International Law on this point existed, but it was generally recognized that such a law, for the future guidance of the Great and Small Powers of the world, should now be laid down.

Practically, British usage was looked upon in those days as International Law. As this custom or usage, however, favoured those Governments, like Great Britain, which possess ports and coaling-stations in the Seven Seas, it did not agree with the interests of those which possess very few such ports and stations or none at all. This latter was the situation of Russia and Germany. In spite of the greatest diplomatic difficulties a convention was drawn up concerning the rights and duties of neutral Powers in naval war, and this convention introduced two important innovations in maritime law, one regulating the duration of the stay of belligerent warships in neutral ports, and the other the quantity of fuel which belligerent vessels may take on in neutral ports.

In the former of these two cases the British custom was to limit this stay to twenty-four hours; but the Russian delegation introduced here a new principle based on the sovereignty of every neutral State, and the right of each to publish its own special rules on this point. In virtue of this new International Law, various States during the Great

War published such special provisions: Great Britain maintained the rule of twenty-four hours, Russia prescribed three days, France appointed no time-limit. The same principle of sovereignty was applied to the question of fuel: Article 19 of the Hague Convention allows belligerent warships to revictual in neutral ports or roadsteads in order to bring their supplies up to the peace standard, or else to ship sufficient fuel to enable them to reach the nearest port of their own country (the old British custom): but it also permits them to "*fill up their bunkers built to carry fuel*, when in neutral countries *which have adopted this method* of determining the amount of fuel to be supplied".

These innovations proved so interesting that the Conference tried to introduce some analogous definitions and ameliorations also into the laws of maritime contraband, etc. Time failing, these questions were reserved for a special maritime conference of some of the Great Powers to be held in London two years later. By that time I had become Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs in St. Petersburg, and was put by the Minister, Isvolsky, in charge of this negotiation. Russia was most ably represented at the London Maritime Conference of 1909 by Professor Baron Taube, and achieved a number of important results put down in a draft convention, following the same trend of working out a truly universal international law. The House of Lords refused to pass this draft, but some of its provisions appeared so useful that it remained *de facto* in force during the Italo-Turkish War of 1911 and even later. I remember that on the basis of one of the stipulations of this convention approved by Turkey I succeeded, as Ambassador in Constantinople, in persuading the Turks in 1911 to let three steamers carrying Russian coal pass through the Straits from the Black Sea to Sicily, although Turkey was at the time at war with Italy. The Second Hague Peace Conference lasted over three months, and on it were represented all the Independent

States of the world, so that it could justly be called "The First Parliament of Mankind".

As the Pope and the King of Italy have now become reconciled, it may be interesting to recollect that Russia, invariably considering the Pope an independent sovereign, invited him to send his representatives to both the Hague Peace Conferences. As Minister to the Holy See, I transmitted to the Pope the invitation of 1898, and as Minister at The Hague I saw to it that the invitation of 1907 was sent to Rome. To the Pope these invitations appeared perfectly appropriate, and he would have taken part in discussing questions concerning the peace of the world had not the Royal Italian Government in both cases declared that, if a delegate of the Pope appeared at the Conference, Italy would not participate. Thus the Pope was not represented at the Hague Conferences. But now, the situation having been completely changed, we shall surely see the Pope represented at future international meetings of that nature, and I believe very probably at the League of Nations.

If we compare the Hague Peace Conference with the League of Nations instituted by the Treaty of Versailles of 1919, we cannot help noticing an important advantage which the Hague Conferences possessed over the Council and the General Assemblies of this League: there was no need of any ballot for a State to be represented on a Hague Conference with the same powers and equal rights with all the other members. Thus the idea put forward recently by Mr. Kellogg that a full international conference would be required to legislate on questions of maritime law could perhaps best be put in practice by convoking such a Third Hague Conference as had been foreseen by the Second, limiting beforehand its programme to a definite number of maritime and other questions. I venture to think that the League of Nations, when it becomes really a league of all nations, and not, as it is now, a league of some nations,

might assume more and more the character of an executive body, while the legislative functions in the domain of modern international law might devolve on conferences of the type of the Hague Conferences of 1899 and 1907.

The Conference of 1907 was accompanied by various festivities and social functions which have left a lasting memory in the minds of those who were members. Of peculiar interest and attractiveness were the banquets organized by the various representatives of Latin America. The Dutch Government arranged for the members of the Conference a very interesting excursion to Rotterdam, and the Belgian Government one to Bruges, where was held a celebration in honour of the jubilee of the Order of the Golden Fleece. A tournament was enacted in the market-place of Bruges, reproducing exactly the famous tourney held there as so well described by the chroniclers of the time. Among the knights who entered the lists before our eyes were descendants of some of the knights who had jousted on that memorable occasion five hundred years ago. Even the public seated around the lists wore the exact costumes of that ancient time. The Tzar sent some interesting objects to the unique exhibition of memorabilia of the Golden Fleece, in the neighbouring Hôtel de Ville. I chose to go from The Hague to Bruges by sea, and in passing through the sleepy town of Zeebrugge and its narrow canal, I had no premonition that this was ten years later to become the scene of one of the most brilliant and daring feats in the Great War.



**PART VIII**

***GLIMPSES OF HIGH POLITICS***



## CHAPTER XXXII

BERLIN UNDER BISMARCK'S FIRST TWO SUCCESSORS,  
1893-1896

On being appointed Councillor of our Embassy in Berlin in the summer of 1893 I was told by my friend and elder colleague Obolensky that I was now about to enter the field of "High Politics". And so it turned out, for in Berlin I was to witness the delicate and masterly way in which the Russian Government, represented by Count Paul A. Shouvaloff, of Philippopolis fame, managed Russia's transition from the alliance of the Three Emperors to her new alliance with France. This change, of which I have already spoken, became inevitable after the brusque dismissal of Bismarck on March 17, 1890, just as he was about to renew Germany's secret alliance with Russia, and after Caprivi had admitted his inability to "juggle with three balls", as Bismarck had so ably done in his secret relations with Russia, Austria, and Italy.

Russia was helped in this transition by the extraordinary personal prestige of her Ambassador at Berlin, not only with Emperor William and the German Court, but also and especially with the German Army. But great difficulties of an economic and financial character had to be overcome in order to enable Russia to emancipate herself from her dependence upon Germany in politics, money, and commerce. That dependence had become so great that Germany had ventured to impose upon Russian wheat imported into Germany a differential tariff meant to protect the interests of German landowners—for to this group belonged most of the official class that formed the mainstay of the German Empire. Russia resented such inequality of treatment, and in June 1893 broke off her commercial relations with Germany, subjecting all German imports and all German shipping to double the taxes imposed on any other country.

It so happened that it fell to my lot to announce this economic war to the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Baron Marschall von Bieberstein. Being well aware how dangerous the situation might become if these economic hostilities should extend to the domain of politics, I succeeded, when making this declaration, in forestalling a complete rupture by informing the Minister at the same time that Russia had already appointed Commissioners to negotiate a new treaty of commerce in the autumn. On October 1, 1893, our Commissioners met those of Germany in Berlin and there began a protracted negotiation. This resulted in the Treaty of Commerce of January 1894, which secured very considerable advantages for Russia, thanks to the powerful will of Emperor Alexander III, to Witte, his Minister of Finance, and to the learning and ability of the First Russian Commissioner, Timeriazeff. Unfortunately Russia was to enjoy these advantages only for ten years; for when in 1904 the term of the treaty expired, she was on the eve of her war with Japan, and Germany sold Russia her benevolent neutrality at the price of essential concessions in the new tariff. And when in 1914 these negotiations again fell due, the outbreak of the Great War prevented any commercial or other friendly agreement.

General (later, Count) Caprivi was in appearance rather like Bismarck, tall, burly, mustachioed, and wearing usually a military uniform; but, intellectually and politically, he was not equal to the part of Imperial Chancellor. This part had been imagined and created by Bismarck to fit himself, without—curiously enough—his even thinking of a successor. According to Bismarck's plan the whole government of the Empire was concentrated in the mind and hands of the Chancellor. It was like a coat of mail made to fit a giant, so that a man of less stature or strength could not carry the weight of it. Such, in fact, was the case with his first two successors. Caprivi spoke French indifferently, as

I observed when I handed him, from our Emperor, the diamond insignia of the highest Russian Order—that of St. Andrew. William II soon convinced himself of Caprivi's inefficiency and appointed in his stead the former German Ambassador in Paris, Prince Hohenlohe. The Prince was a man of great culture and wide diplomatic and political experience, but he was nearly eighty years of age, small and wizened, and physically neither strong nor active. He was married to the Princess Sayn-Witgenstein, a Russian lady who possessed great estates in Western Russia. These she was obliged to liquidate because of a new law of Emperor Alexander III prohibiting foreigners from possessing land in those parts of the Empire. Prince Hohenlohe was still Chancellor when I left Berlin for Bulgaria in 1896.

Ever since the dismissal of Bismarck, William II had been bent on following "a new course" with respect to both domestic and foreign policy. The latter was still based on the Triple Alliance, in which Bismarck as we now know, had not much confidence, seeing in it only a defensive agreement. His successors attempted to interpret it as an offensive alliance. In 1914 came its utter breakdown, but long before that it had forced Russia, France, and England into a Triple Entente by the constant brandishing of Germany's sword in defence of Austria-Hungary's ambitions. How this came about I was in a peculiarly privileged position to witness when in 1908 I became Assistant to Isvolsky in St. Petersburg and Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

IN ST. PETERSBURG AS ACTING MINISTER FOR  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 1908-1909

While I was at The Hague Isvolsky was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs in place of Count Lamsdorff, who had failed so grievously in our Far Eastern policy and on whom lay the official responsibility for our unfortunate war with Japan. What were the political ideas with which Isvolsky took office may be seen from his own memoirs, which unfortunately have remained unfinished, as also from Sazonoff's *Recollections*.

Isvolsky wrote me in the summer of 1906 a very friendly letter, telling me that he counted on my assistance, and when I met him in Paris in the autumn of 1907 he offered me the post of Ambassador to Japan. I willingly accepted, as I had established very cordial relations with the Minister of Japan at The Hague and with the Japanese delegation at the Peace Conference of that year. But in November he wrote me again, asking me to become, instead, Political Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs. This, he said, would be a sacrifice on my part, but he asked it of me in the name of our country's interests, which, he believed, my acquaintance with Eastern problems could further. Also, being in ill health, he did not expect to remain long at the head of the Foreign Office, and considered me as eventually his successor. He, however, left me the choice of an Embassy in case this time of probation should prove too long. I answered accepting his proposal unconditionally and promising to do my very best to help him in his arduous task—all the more so since he saw in me, as he wrote me, a man "belonging to the traditional circle of Russian landed nobility, which dominates, and I hope will continue in the future to dominate, our representative institutions". It was under such circumstances

that I came to be appointed Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs in January 1908.

The most important political event of 1908 was the arbitrary abrogation by Austria-Hungary of Article 25 of the Treaty of Berlin, by changing her occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina into an annexation of these Serbian provinces. Russia had secretly consented many years before to this annexation (see Chapter VII), but Isvolsky judged it necessary to qualify his formal consent by certain conditions, which were drawn up by him in a memorandum of seven points. One of these points stipulated the opening of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles to Russia's men-of-war. All the changes to be introduced into the Treaty of Berlin were later to be examined by a European Conference. This plan, with which I was in hearty agreement, was sanctioned by the Emperor, and on August 6/19, 1908, Isvolsky went abroad, officially for his health, but in reality to meet the Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Baron Aehrenthal, at Buchlau, the estate of Count Berchtold, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in St. Petersburg. I remained in St. Petersburg, with the Emperor's sanction, as Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs until his return.

Isvolsky had not acquainted either the Premier, Stolypin, or the Minister of Finance, Kokovtzeff, with his plan, so that when I laid before them, as members of the Privy Cabinet Council, the conditions of our consent, to which Austria-Hungary had already fully agreed in Buchlau, Stolypin protested with the greatest energy against Russia's giving her official consent to the subjection of two Slavonic provinces to German and Hungarian domination. Kokovtzeff seconded Stolypin, and the latter even declared that if this negotiation was proceeded with he would tender his resignation to the Emperor. As it was for the Emperor to decide, we obtained His Majesty's permission to submit—Stolypin and I together—a report on this subject.

After mature reflection I made up my mind to side with Stolypin rather than bring about his dismissal, as this would inevitably have hastened that reaction which, thus far, he alone had been able to stem. The Emperor agreed, not very willingly, to send new instructions to Isvolsky.<sup>1</sup> As it turned out, Aehrenthal himself helped Isvolsky out of the unexpected difficulties of his new position, when the Vienna Cabinet published the decree of annexation without waiting for the final answer of Russia. Although Isvolsky obtained the full consent of Italy and France, and the qualified consent of the British Government, to his scheme concerning the Straits, the convocation of a European Conference (for which I was preparing a circular—as Isvolsky told me, “à la Gortchakoff”) fell through, and first Serbia and then Russia herself had to accept unconditionally the fact of the annexation. I did my best as head of the Foreign Office to assist Serbia through this crisis, so that no material or political harm should be done to her, and in this, by strictly following Russian advice, Serbia succeeded.

On March 10, 1909, the German Ambassador presented to Isvolsky what was, essentially, an ultimatum in support of Austro-Hungarian pretensions. During the two hours preceding Pourtalès' visit, Isvolsky and I, walking up and down in his study, discussed this question in all its bearings, and I expressed the opinion that, just as Japan accepted the Russo-Franco-German ultimatum but at once began preparing for a war with Russia for which it was not then ready, so Russia should now accept this German ultimatum, knowing as we did that we were not ready for a European War. The ultimatum, couched, I must admit, in the most amiable form, was therefore accepted, and the first threat of the Great War was thus averted; but when in 1914 a

<sup>1</sup> I have spoken at greater length about this incident in my article “Reminiscences of Nicholas II”, *Contemporary Review*, October 1928.

somewhat similar situation as between Austria-Hungary, Serbia, and Russia again arose, Russia was able—perhaps to Germany's surprise—to hold her head high under the renewed German menace.

These were "High Politics" indeed, and in the spring of 1909, before being appointed to Constantinople, I had once more to act as head of our Foreign Office during Isvolsky's absence from St. Petersburg for reasons of health. By that time it had become quite clear that good relations between Russia and Germany could be maintained only if Germany undertook not to encourage any further Austro-Hungarian expansion in the Balkans. I presented a memorandum in this sense to the Emperor. It is among the first batch of secret documents that the Bolsheviks unearthed in the archives of our Foreign Office and published to the world. As a result of my personal knowledge of the subject I venture to express the following opinion: the Great War was the inevitable consequence of the encouragement given by Germany to Austria-Hungary in her policy of penetration into the Balkans, which was combined with the grandiose Pan-German idea of a Germanized "Middle Europe". In Bismarck's day this would never have happened. What did happen was the result of Germany's novel ambition to grapple with a task more stupendous than that of Bismarck—without a Bismarck.

As I now look back and think over my experiences as head of the Russian Foreign Office, I am tempted to indulge in a few words of philosophizing about Free Will. Invested with the powers of my office and the full and friendly confidence of the Emperor, I thought: I can now do what I wish. I soon found out, however, that in any given case I could only do one thing—the thing I considered it my duty towards my Emperor and my country to do. Thus my free choice could be exercised only within very narrow limits. And when I had to choose between several courses of action,

I could finally decide only on that one which appeared to me the very best according to my feeling, knowledge, and reason. This experience, it seems to me, confirms the philosophical opinion that *Free Will is but the full manifestation of one's true self.*

## IN CONSTANTINOPLE AS AMBASSADOR, 1909-1912

In Constantinople, before the Great War, Ambassadors of the Great Powers might have been expected to live in the atmosphere and do the work of "High Politics" as much as in Berlin, Paris, or London. But such was not the case—to the detriment, I believe, of the peace and security of the world. For the crisis which brought on the war of 1914 developed out of an international situation in the Balkans, and it could have been, if not fully averted, at least directed to the greater advantage of the Triple Entente had these Powers turned their attention and their united efforts to what was going on in Constantinople before and after the Balkan wars of 1912-13.

There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

Never could that Shakespearean maxim be better applied than to what happened in Constantinople in 1910.

The Young Turk revolution of 1908, which overthrew the "Bloody" Sultan Abdul Hamid and experimented with constitutional government for the Ottoman Empire, opened up for the members of the Triple Entente—France, Russia, and Great Britain—a unique opportunity to substitute their influence for that of Germany, which had become predominant in the last years of Abdul Hamid's reign largely as a consequence of the personal visits of William II to the Sultan. The first step in this new direction of Entente policy was duly taken by appointing to Constantinople as Ambassadors new men who looked with favour upon the régime which it was hoped would renovate Turkey. The British Government took the lead by sending Sir Gerard

Lowther, brother of the Speaker of the House of Commons and a former colleague of mine as First Secretary in Constantinople. He was received with enthusiasm by the new liberal Government at Constantinople and its friends. The appointment of the French Ambassador and my own appointment were by agreement between St. Petersburg and Paris published on the same day, May 25 (o.s.), 1909; and, although Isvolsky gave me no instructions as to what I was to do in Constantinople, saying that I knew best myself, it was expected that Bompard, the new French Ambassador, and I would work there hand in hand. This we did. Nevertheless and unfortunately, as I learned later from Sazonoff, "the Triple Entente at that time did not extend to the Near East".

The consequence of this lack of agreement was that each of the three friendly Governments pursued its own policy in Constantinople, without establishing beforehand a full mutual understanding. France tried to seize control of the Turkish finances by an elaborate scheme of supervision, to be exercised from Paris, as a condition for further loans; Great Britain concentrated on the junction of the Baghdad Railway with the Persian Gulf and on upholding British navigation on the lower reaches of the Tigris; while Russia was especially interested in railway construction in Asia Minor and in the opening of the Straits to Russian men-of-war. All three Powers, however, being sincere well-wishers of renascent Turkey, had the advantage over Germany of never having been the partisans—and perhaps accomplices—of Abdul Hamid. From the day of his deposition until the autumn of 1910 Germany's influence in Constantinople, where Ambassador Baron Marschall was maintained throughout the crisis, fell so low as to have practically disappeared.

When I arrived in Constantinople in time for the celebration of the first anniversary of the Young Turk Government on July 11, 1909, I found the Grand Vizier, Hilmi

Pasha, the former excellent Inspector-General of Reforms in Macedonia, perfectly free from German influence, and ready to work with Russia, Great Britain, and France. His fall was brought about a few months later by an adverse anti-British vote in the Ottoman Parliament, disapproving of his acquiescence in certain British demands concerning navigation on the Tigris. This was the first failure of the Triple Entente in Constantinople, and it might easily have been avoided had the three Powers really worked together in the Near East.

Then came France's turn. The Young Turks resented and strenuously opposed the pretensions of France to control their finances, and when a small loan that was absolutely necessary to the Turkish Government was refused by France—then the banker of Europe—the highly gifted and patriotic Minister of Finance, Djavid Bey, implored the representatives of the Triple Entente in Constantinople not to insist on subordinating this minor financial operation to the general question raised by the French Government, which required further study and discussion. The French Government, however, not only maintained its opposition, but even persuaded the British Government not to allow this loan to be floated in London. Then the unexpected and unbelievable happened. A German financier, representing a weak syndicate of German and Austro-Hungarian banks, arrived in Constantinople and in a few hours negotiated the loan, giving the Turkish Government the paltry sum it needed, though on far more onerous conditions than could have been obtained in Paris or London. Thus the spell was broken, and as the German Minister of Foreign Affairs in those days, Kiderlen-Wächter (the last German statesman of Bismarck's persuasion), writes, Germany at once regained the footing she had lost.

The Russian Government in its turn made at the very beginning of my term of service a grievous mistake in coun-

tenancing the opposition of certain Russian reactionary influences to the Tzar's proposed visit to Constantinople *en route* to Italy to return the visit of the King of Italy. The Ottoman Government, with which I was ordered to take up the matter, showed the greatest joy at the prospect of his appearance in Constantinople, and begged us to arrange everything as we liked best. But gradually my instructions became more and more dilatory, until at last the Emperor's personal desire was set aside, and he went to Racconigi and back by rail, all the way running great risks to his life. I am convinced that such a visit to Constantinople would not only have laid a solid foundation for the predominance of the Triple Entente in Constantinople, but would even have prevented Turkey's joining Germany in the Great War.

Further, our desire to see railways built in the northern and eastern parts of Asia Minor, where our special interests had been recognized by the Turkish Government as a compensation for the Baghdad Line conceded to Germany, was thwarted by the accumulating proofs of the Young Turks' incapacity for serious constructive statesmanship. The growing conviction of that incapacity led Sazonoff, in the beginning of 1912, to abandon the plan on which I had been working, of concluding a direct agreement with Turkey concerning the opening of the Straits to Russian men-of-war, on the same basis as Isvolsky's proposition to Aehrenthal in 1908. My plan had coincided in September 1911 with one elaborated by our Foreign Office itself, but it was introduced by me as due to my own initiative. In this way I meant, in case I did not succeed, to shield my Government from any responsibility in this connection. As Sazonoff, on recovering from a long and serious illness, met with considerable opposition to our plan concerning the Straits on the part of the British Government, he decided not to pursue this plan any further. So I was recalled from

Constantinople and appointed Senator in March 1912. In this case, as in the course of the whole of my life, I advocated only those measures which might be achieved without war. But when the Great War came, Sazonoff, as is well known, took up again the question of the Straits and even of Constantinople. He came to an agreement with both France and Great Britain in 1915, stipulating the annexation to Russia of the Straits and Constantinople, although he personally was adverse to Russia's taking possession of the city.

I feel it my duty to say that I had always insisted to the Foreign Office that our plan of opening the Straits could only succeed with the help of France and England; and in the beginning of my negotiations I received a telegram from our Foreign Office informing me that this help had been secured. I leave it to those who sent that telegram to decide whether this assertion was a voluntary or an involuntary delusion. From what has been said above one can easily conclude that had an agreement existed between the members of the Triple Entente as to what they ought or ought not to undertake in Constantinople, Germany would not have succeeded in forcing the Turkish Government into war on her side against the Triple Entente.

As I shall not again revert to the question of the Straits, about which I had to negotiate as Ambassador in Constantinople, I wish to say here what, in my opinion, might be a lasting, peaceful, and generally satisfactory solution of the question of the Straits and of that of Constantinople. I have already explained (in Chapter XII) why Russia did not seize Constantinople in 1877, and I have just now referred to the fact that under Sazonoff in 1915 she agreed with Great Britain and France about the annexation of Constantinople and the Straits to Russia. Now I believe that in the first case Russia was right, and in the second case wrong.

The elements of the solution I venture to suggest have

been partly indicated by the Covenant of the League of Nations of 1919, and by the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 between Turkey and her adversaries. Its basis would have to be, I think :

- (1) The disjunction of the question of Constantinople from that of the Straits ; and
- (2) That Russia and the other Black Sea Powers should be recognized as having special interests in the Straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, such as Great Britain has in the Suez Canal and the United States in the Panama Canal.

Let us speak first of the Straits. The above-mentioned "special interests" of Russia and the Black Sea States were admitted for the first time, in an international Act, in the Treaty of Lausanne ; but this was there done very insufficiently, and the Moscow Government of 1923 was undoubtedly right when it refused to agree to this Convention. What the Black Sea States—Russia, Turkey, Rumania, and Bulgaria—need is that the Straits should remain open to commercial navigation both in time of peace and in time of war, and that the security of the Straits in this respect should be guaranteed by permitting these countries in common to exercise a direct material control over the application of existing international provisions on this subject. The stipulations of the Convention of Lausanne are insufficient, but fortunately Article 19 of the Covenant admits of a peaceable re-examination of such stipulations in case of need, with the hope of finding a better solution for the problems which in time will become clearer than they are to-day.

This applies also to the limitations imposed by the Convention of Lausanne on the movements of battle-fleets through the Straits. These limitations should be made more rigorous, so as to give a greater degree of security to Russia

and the other Black Sea States concerning this "key to their house", as Bismarck very justly called the Bosphorus and Dardanelles. At the same time the material control I have spoken of, on the part of the Black Sea Powers, should extend also to the movements of men-of-war through the Straits, these Powers becoming the executive of the Straits Commission as collective guardians of the Straits.

It must be admitted that the political and strategical importance of the Straits has considerably diminished since the advent of aviation. For nowadays, and to a still greater extent in the future, access can be had to the shores of the Black Sea for commercial and military purposes whether the Straits are closed or open. This new factor should therefore make it easier for the other Powers to recognize the special interests of Russia and the other Black Sea States in the question of the Straits, and thus to establish in this part of the world the normal conditions essential to the maintenance of a durable peace.

To-day more than ever Russia does not need Constantinople. She must do her best to maintain the existing *status quo*, with Constantinople as a part of the Turkish Republic—a situation that need in no way interfere with the projected solution of the question of the Straits. On the contrary, Turkey could only benefit by the enlarging of the part played by her and by the other Black Sea States in matters concerning the Straits, of which she remains the territorial sovereign. I shall not live to see it, but it seems to me very probable that if the League of Nations is to fulfil the great expectations it has raised its permanent seat will be, some day, transferred from uninteresting Geneva to world-important Constantinople. In this way a further element making for the security and peace of the region would be introduced into the political and economic situation of the Near East.



*P A R T I X*

*SIDELIGHTS ON THE GREAT WAR*



## THROUGH GERMANY ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WAR

It was a piece of special good luck for me that my eldest son's summer holidays in 1914 began on Wednesday, July 29th. I went to Edinburgh to fetch him from Merchiston Castle School, while my wife waited for us in Frankfort. We reached London on Thursday morning, the 30th, took the boat-train for Harwich, crossed to Ostend and traversed Belgium in peace in the evening of that same day. When my son asked me what the station was where we entered the dining-car, I said it was Liège, a small town famous for its ironworks, little thinking it was four days later to leap suddenly into a permanent place in history as the first stumbling-block on Emperor William's march to Paris. During Thursday night I saw at the Cologne railway station German mobilized soldiers in full marching kit. This shows that Germany had already commenced mobilizing on her Western frontier on July 30th.

We reached Frankfort on Friday, July 31st, saw Professor von Norden, the medical authority whom my wife had to consult, and decided to leave for Switzerland on the following morning. In Frankfort unusual things were evidently happening. A crowd was standing before the railway station, acclaiming some German Staff officers, who were telling them a piece of evidently important military news. This was about the ultimatum that Germany had just addressed to Russia. On Saturday, August 1st, we took the 9.15 a.m. train for Bâle, and intended stopping for lunch at Baden-Baden at the villa of an old Russian friend and colleague of mine. But private telegrams were no longer being accepted, and big placards announced that the German Empire had been declared under provisional martial law. So we continued our journey without stopping anywhere.

At the Baden-Baden station a French lady joined us with her two children. She had been turned back from Strassburg on her way to Paris from Vienna, where her husband was then First Secretary of the French Embassy. The Franco-German frontier was thus already closed.

At the station of Freiburg a telegram announced mobilization. All passengers with all their luggage were immediately obliged to leave the train, and when my wife's maid said she preferred remaining in the carriage, she was gently advised not to do so. She took some snapshots of the immense heaps of luggage which were rapidly stacked on the station platform. I ought in justice to add that in spite of all this our trunks were safely forwarded later to their destination, Milan. By another stroke of good luck one more train left Freiburg that night for Zürich, at 10 o'clock. We had to carry our hand-luggage ourselves, as all porters had disappeared from the station. The bridges on the way were already guarded by armed militiamen. However, we got happily through, and only on the following day we learned that war between Russia and Germany had begun at 7.15 p.m. on August 1st. Had we remained in Germany only a few hours more I would certainly have been interned in some concentration camp, where so many Russians from that time on suffered and died.

My aim was now to reach Russia as soon as possible, and the only way to do so was to travel through the neutral countries of Italy, Greece, and Turkey. In Venice we met my former colleagues of Constantinople, the Ministers of Belgium and Holland, who were on their way back to their posts. None of us had any money, because a moratorium had been declared for all the banks in Italy. So we formed what we called the *Club des Décarés* (the Dead-Broke Club), and were glad when one of us invited the rest to lunch, while we all united to buy one daily newspaper costing five cents. We kept merry and managed as best we could,

but to continue our journey we had to pawn some of my wife's diamonds, which we succeeded in redeeming only ten years later.

An overcrowded passenger-steamer took us to Patras, whence we crossed Greece by rail to Athens. There we had friends. These kindly helped my wife in taking care of our son, who had fallen dangerously ill. I myself was unable to endure more than a week the terrific heat of Athens in August, and secured a berth on the French steamer *Portugal*, which was leaving for Odessa. This, as it happened, was the last passenger-steamer to enter the Black Sea. It was detained for some hours at Tenedos by the news that the German cruisers *Goeben* and *Breslau* had just steamed through the Straits to Constantinople. But later the French Ambassador, Bompard, telegraphed that the *Portugal* could proceed on its way and would be piloted through the Dardanelles by a Turkish destroyer. In Constantinople my old friend Michael de Giers, who had succeeded me as Ambassador to Turkey, came to see me on board the *Portugal*, and told me how difficult his diplomatic situation was becoming. On the following day the *Portugal* reached Odessa. This steamer was nearly sunk during the bombardment of Odessa by the *Breslau* about two months later, and was destroyed by a German submarine in 1916 while serving as a Russian hospital-ship during the taking of Trebizond by the Russian fleet.

When my wife and son were able to start for Russia from Athens, the Straits being already closed, they had to travel, under great difficulties, by way of Salonika, Nish, Sofia, and Varna. In Nish my wife was particularly struck by the horrible state of the local military hospital, where hundreds of wounded Serbs had been brought from the Austrian front, and where only insufficient chloroform, antiseptics, and dressings were to be had and there was not even warm water to wash the wounds. From Sofia she ordered some of

the most necessary things to be sent to that hospital. Her journey with our son through Bulgaria was made easy by the kindness of Tzar Ferdinand and the care of our Minister, Savinsky. Ultimately we all met in Sebastopol, which my family reached just the day before the bombardment of that port by the *Goeben*. This Turkish-German attack, perpetrated at a time when there was still peace between Turkey and Russia, luckily did no harm to any of our warships. My wife and children witnessed it from the terrace of our house.

## RUSSIA "DRY" AND UNITED

When I went down to lunch at the hotel where I usually stopped in Odessa and ordered a glass of *vodka* and a bottle of claret, I was utterly astonished on being told that no alcoholic drinks were to be had in Odessa. Thus for the first time I learned that the whole of Russia had automatically become "dry" from the date of the mobilization of its Army. According to a long-existing law, the sale of spirits and wine is forbidden in a military district as soon as the troops therein are mobilized. Since all the military districts of the whole Empire had this time been mobilized, the sale of intoxicating drinks had been stopped all at once and everywhere. Some of the bureaucrats in St. Petersburg grew afraid that such a drastic measure would be resented by the people. I can vouch for the contrary. Travelling through the country, first to Moscow and then to Samara and Bogdanovka, I noticed a general consensus of opinion praising this measure, which struck at the very root of that great failing and misfortune of the Russian people, drunkenness.

I had in Bogdanovka a very good workman, a tall, strong, and hardy peasant, who received from me every autumn a sheepskin coat, high felt boots, and a warm cap for winter wear. Regularly, by the beginning of every winter, he had pawned or sold all these useful things to buy *vodka*. But in 1914 and 1915 I saw him duly arrayed in this winter finery and heard him say with great sincerity, "I do hope the sale of *vodka* will not be allowed again." There were two very good bricklayers, the Sokoloffs, father and son, who made a good deal of money but spent it all in drink. In 1915 the father, who had been working for me, came to ask me to sell him a horse, "because", said he, "our business is getting on very well and I need a horse for it". I sold him one for

200 roubles, which was a fair price, and was happy to see him prospering because he and his son could not indulge any more in drink.

There is on the Volga River a certain class of dock labourers who were commonly called *bosiaki* (the bare-legged), because, though they were well paid for the transportation of goods and luggage to and from the boats, they used to spend it all on drink, never having money enough to buy themselves a pair of boots. Now a friend of mine happened in 1915 to meet one of these labourers wearing a good pair of boots, who said to him, "I have, sir, five roubles and do not know what to do with them." "Haven't you got any relatives!" "No, I don't think I have any—oh, I have, though—a sister in Kostroma." "Well, send her the money," said my friend, and the man followed his advice. How happy were the women of Russia at this unexpected blessing! They had always been the direst sufferers from the curse of their men's drunkenness; and now they knew how to put to good use the extra money which remained in the household when Russia became "dry".

In this connection another fact—an unexpected fact—came under my observation. I believed that this war, like any other public calamity, would impoverish the Russian peasants, but to my surprise I saw that it was making them richer than they had ever been before. Every family whose bread-winner had been mobilized received a monthly allowance from the Government in proportion to the number of mouths to be fed. This allowance in some cases, I knew, amounted to as much as ten gold roubles a month (twenty shillings). Never had so much ready money poured regularly into the hands of Russian peasant women, and in the course of the three years which I then spent at home I saw the women and children of Bogdanovka better dressed and shod, and having small luxuries they had never before been able to afford.

These women, like Russian women in general, during those critical years showed wonderful energy, patience, and courage, balking at no work. We must not forget that the mobilization of 1914 caught Russia in the midst of the harvest, and when I arrived at Bogdanovka in September no one knew how the crops were to be garnered, since all able-bodied men had been called to the colours, leaving at home only old men, boys, and women. I am happy to say that not an acre of the crops in the Bogdanovka district was left to rot. This was accomplished thanks to the American harvesting-machines, which I and other neighbouring landlords lent to the peasants, along with the mechanics who worked them, the peasant women doing all the rest of the harvesting. The following year the Samara *Zemstvo* also helped us, by sending to Bogdanovka some young pupils of the local agricultural school and two or three McCormick reaping-machines. Later the numerous Austrian and German prisoners of war were allowed to join freely in our agricultural work for a moderate salary, and helped us a great deal. The sale of agricultural produce was free and the prices were high, so that here again the peasant made good profits. For my part, I set my big water-mill on the Kinel to grinding rye-flour for the Army. I could do this well, for rye-flour was the specialty of my mill and had obtained for me a gold medal at the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1900.

I shall never forget my astonishment when, on my arrival in the town of Samara and on being invited to attend a public meeting on the subject of the best way of organizing unofficial help in the war, I found assembled, in amicable discussion and co-operation, representatives of all the local political parties from the extreme right to the extreme left. All had agreed to sink for a while their differences and to concentrate on helping to win the war. From such non-political gatherings, which took place all over Russia, sprang

the splendid action of the various organizations of Russian *Zemstvos* and towns, assuring supplies and foodstuffs for the Army as well as for the labourers supporting it at home. One of these organizations was known as the *Prodmogor* (Supply Service of Moscow and District), of which I later became representative in Constantinople. Another was the famous train-supply organization of Pourishkevitch, who thereby deserved the heartfelt thanks of thousands of Russian officers and men. He it was who, later, with Prince Yousou-poff, killed Rasputin. Thanks to these and many similar organizations, Russia passed with unprecedented facility through the trials of the Great War down to the Bolshevik revolution of October 1917.

Some years previously I had granted a plot of my land for the erection of a *Zemstvo* hospital, about a mile from the Bogdanovka Manor House. This circumstance now allowed me to open a small Red Cross hospital for ten wounded in one of the service buildings of the Manor. My idea was to give the soldiers from Bogdanovka who happened to be wounded the chance to recuperate in their own village. In many cases this plan succeeded, and it may be imagined how happy were the wives and mothers of those young men who were brought wounded from the Front and could be cared for within their reach in Bogdanovka. It may be interesting to note that, though Bogdanovka lay more than a thousand miles from the fighting-line, I received some of those who had been wounded near Warsaw on the ninth day after the battle. This goes to prove how good was the organization of the distribution of the wounded. And when the Bogdanovka peasants used to get letters saying that such and such an one of their family was lying wounded in some other Russian city, I would communicate with the C.M.O. on the spot, and could generally get the man transferred to Bogdanovka. My wife and other ladies of our family were busy with Red Cross work, and I remember that several

hundreds of warm gloves for the soldiers were knitted at home from the wool of our own sheep.

I recall two cases of gas-poisoning. One man got better; the other went on losing a pound a week in weight and was growing more and more exhausted, so that at last he was sent home to a part of the province where *koumis* (mare's milk) could be had, in the hope that he might recover. As soon as our wounded were sufficiently strong, the doctor and I allowed them to live at home, to the great joy of their womenfolk. One boy, who had been wounded rather seriously in the left arm, was rapidly getting better, but the doctor advised him to remain in the hospital ten days more. He, however, preferred returning to his regiment without waiting any longer, because fighting was going on. I cannot help comparing this willingness to continue fighting with what I witnessed in 1918 in Sebastopol after it had been occupied by German troops: a German infantry officer who used to come to our house told me about his visits to a Russian doctor, to whom he applied because of a bad liver. When I asked him why he did not address himself to the local German Medical Staff, he answered: "Oh no! these men would send me back to the Front in a fortnight." And this, as he and everyone knew, would have been equivalent to a death-warrant.



*PART X*

*UNDER THE SHADOW OF BOLSHEVISM*



## CHAPTER XXXVII

### THE PARLIAMENTARY AND BOLSHEVIST REVOLUTIONS OF 1917

Revolution in Russia advanced, as we have already seen, in two distinct but parallel currents. The nobility and *intelligentsia* aimed at obtaining political and constitutional rights, while the peasants were striving for "land and liberty". We have observed also that in Russia failures in foreign policy were always the harbingers of reform accompanied by domestic troubles. The Crimean War brought on the liberal reforms of Alexander II, followed by revolutionary agitation and by attempts on the Tzar's life; and the War of Liberation brought Russia to the verge of constitutional government and to the assassination of the Tzar Liberator. In a similar way, but on a far larger scale, our unnecessary, unfortunate, and unpopular war with Japan of 1904-5 was followed by a revolutionary upheaval which extended to the whole of Russia, and which through the medium of a general strike stopped all railway, postal, and telegraphic communications within the Empire. This obliged Emperor Nicholas II to grant a Constitution, with an elective Chamber of Deputies and a semi-elective Council of State.

The miscarriage of this Constitution, which had come too late, is now a matter of history. But, from the very first meeting of the first *Duma* it became clear that the Russian peasants had lost their faith in the power and, possibly, in the good will of their "Little Father" to help them to the "land and liberty" for which they had so long been hungering. And when, by changes in the electoral law, the peasants were not allowed to form a majority in the *Duma* in spite of their immense numerical predominance in the Empire, they relapsed in 1907 into a state of passive but sullen discontent. At the same time the *Duma*, which had thus ceased

to be an assembly truly representative of the people and interests of Russia, came to be dominated by a class of fiery theoretical opponents of the Government, ignorant in State affairs and representing only their own personal ideas and ambitions. These men naturally considered their rights under the Constitution as insufficient, and refused from the very beginning to assume the responsibility of government—as is very clearly pointed out in the memoirs of Isvolsky, who in 1906 became Minister for Foreign Affairs. When I was appointed his assistant, I went to see Miliukoff, then leader of the *Cadet* (Constitutional Democratic) Party, whom I had known ten years before as Professor of History at the University of Sofia. He had shown himself, by his book on the Economic Condition of Russia under Peter the Great, to be an able and conscientious historian, and in the *Duma* he had easily attained the situation of Leader of the Opposition. In this rôle he fought as well as he could against the reactionary tendencies of the Government, which were only temporarily suspended while Stolypin was Premier.

By 1905 it had become evident that the Act of Emancipation of 1861 needed to be amended by substituting for communal peasant proprietorship in land a system of full personal hereditary right to a strictly defined plot of land, which, once paid for, would become the peasant's own property. An agrarian law to this effect was passed under Stolypin, in spite of the *Duma's* opposition, in 1906, and I know that in Bogdanovka, by the time the Great War began, one-third of the peasants had already entered into possession of their individual allotments and were doing well. There is now no doubt that had two-thirds of the former serfs and their descendants throughout Russia become proprietors of their land under this law, there would have been no Bolshevik Revolution. For it is a fact, which the Bolshevik experiment of more than ten years has but confirmed, that the resistance

of the Russian peasant to the policy of socialization is insurmountable, and that a Russian peasant possessing his own plot of land in full tenure is as impervious to communistic ideas as the French peasant under similar circumstances proved to be. Stolypin was assassinated in 1911, and one of the reasons for this murder may well have been the fear of certain revolutionaries that his land law, if fully put into practice, would frustrate their hopes of success.

After this catastrophe unfeeling and unheeding bureaucratic reaction went on in Russia apace, and the best men of Russia became estranged from Nicholas II. In the middle of the Great War he dismissed Sazonoff, and, very characteristically, no Lyceans were any more to be found in the Cabinets, except in the very last Cabinet, and then only one. The presence of Rasputin increased the general turmoil in the upper spheres of St. Petersburg. I never saw him, but two lady friends of ours who, coming from abroad, were led by curiosity to visit him, spoke of him as an uncouth peasant with some extraordinary magnetic power in his eyes. I know that when Naumoff was appointed Minister of Agriculture and Domains, after having been for nine years our respected Marshal of the Samara nobility, he refused to receive Rasputin, and was dismissed within three days!

Everyone knew that the root of the trouble lay in the question of our peasants and their land. A Commission had been formed in 1905, under the presidency of Witte, for discussing the whole question of peasant land-holding and of the insufficient self-government of the *mir*. From the Minutes of this Commission one sees clearly that the question was beyond the capacity of a bureaucratic Government. Thus, in one way or another, the principal part of the future organization of Russia lay with the peasants, among whom, as I came to know even in Bogdanovka, revolutionary propaganda was making headway. The Russian peasant wanted

more and more intensely to become free and to live *bez gospod* (without master).

After that period of political good feeling to which I have alluded in the Russian Provinces and which was likewise manifest in a most patriotically intentioned *Duma*, there came an increase in the reactionary follies of the Government, aided by the continual absence of the Emperor, who had unfortunately assumed the functions of Commander-in-Chief. Thus a gulf was being rapidly formed between the *Duma* and the central administration, and the sympathies of patriotic and well-meaning Russians lay generally with the *Duma*, not with the administration. In consequence of this situation, when the *Duma* replied to a *ukase* for its prorogation by obtaining the abdication of the Emperor and by establishing a Provisional Government in March 1917 composed of the leaders of its majority, great hopes were raised among Russians that these acts, which retained the externals of legality, would be conducive to a more successful prosecution of the war and to the establishment of a regular Constitutional Government in the country.

I went to St. Petersburg in the spring of 1917, where my eldest son was at that time a pupil of the Imperial Alexander Lyceum, and called on Miliukoff, who had become Minister for Foreign Affairs, gladly offering him my services, as Sazonoff also had done. From conversations with some old acquaintances in the Diplomatic Service I gathered that the new Government had the sympathies of both Great Britain and France, and that the best results were now expected for the issue of the war. All these hopes and expectations might have been realized if the Russian *Duma* had been, as it was supposed to be, a truly representative Russian institution; but, as I have already said, it had no real backing in the country. The *Cadets* were first in power, and they gave no attention to the problems of the land. The next—the Kerensky régime—was so hesitant that peasant

revolt broke out all over Russia against the Central Government.<sup>1</sup>

Here was the Bolsheviks' opportunity when they staged the Revolution of October 1917. They proclaimed the old peasant slogan that "the land must be given to the peasants", and made a brilliant use of this to manipulate their own victory by enlisting the sympathies of the peasantry. They still further increased this hold by telling the peasants who were in the ranks of the Army to go home in time to take and divide the estates of their landowners. But here the same thing happened as in the Emancipation of 1861: the former serfs enjoyed becoming free, but were disillusioned as to the proprietorship of the land and their civil rights and liberties. In a similar way in 1917, when the Bolsheviks began to apply to Russia their communistic theories, the peasants began to perceive that once more they were not going to obtain the "land and liberty" they hankered after, and that in this respect they were even worse off at the hands of the Bolsheviks than under the Imperial Government. For when they demanded for each peasant full individual hereditary tenure of the land he tilled, the Bolsheviks, in so far as they remained true to their communistic ideals, could only answer, "This is impossible, because in a communistic State no private property can, or ever shall, exist." And as to liberty, the Bolsheviks have always declared that this is "a bourgeois superstition", and that the one thing necessary

<sup>1</sup> In Bogdanovka all remained quiet. The peasants even mounted guard of their own accord over the Manor House to protect it from possible attack or injury. They wrote to me at the same time that the Bogdanovka local peasant Council House had been accidentally burnt down, and asked me to sell them some thousands of bricks from my kiln, as they were about to rebuild it. I instructed my manager to inform them that I would give these bricks free of charge. I was deeply impressed by the fact that while manor houses were being attacked and destroyed, they set about rebuilding their peasant Council House, being perfectly sure that nothing would or could happen to disturb it or them.

is "the dictatorship of the proletariat". Ten years of experience have shown, not only the peasants, but the whole people, that under the Bolshevik régime their liberties are far more restricted than ever before.

Thus the parliamentary revolution of March 1917 ended in complete failure, and the *Duma* was easily superseded, in October of the same year, by the despotic government of the Soviets, claiming to be composed of deputies of the peasants, workmen, and soldiers. These Soviets, as we have seen, had really behind them the material force of several millions of armed men, returned and returning from the Front, and this immense destructive force helped unwittingly to establish in Russia the Bolshevik Government.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### MY FIRST ACQUAINTANCE WITH BOLSHEVISM, OCTOBER 1917 TO MAY 1918

In October 1917 the Bolsheviks obtained the mastery in St. Petersburg and Moscow, but they could do nothing in the Crimea as long as Admiral Kolchak remained there in command of the fortress of Sebastopol and of the Black Sea fleet. So orders were received from St. Petersburg, emanating evidently from Berlin, to do away with Kolchak, and also with General Alekseieff, who was still Chief of the Russian General Staff on the Western Front.

It was not easy to eliminate Admiral Kolchak. I remember him as a small, dark man of about forty-five, intelligent and full of energy. He had made his mark as an Arctic explorer. He had succeeded in retaining control of the Black Sea in spite of the presence there of the *Goeben*, the *Breslau*, and other German and Turkish men-of-war. The first emissaries from among the mutinied sailors of Kronstadt who had killed and ill-treated their officers met with no success in Sebastopol; but the revolutionary contagion gradually spread among the Sebastopol sailors, soldiers, and workmen until Kolchak found himself obliged to find a plausible reason for leaving Sebastopol. He went straight to Siberia and organized there the "White" Army, which marched against the Bolsheviks, driving them across the Ural Mountains through Ekaterinburg, where they had murdered the Emperor and his family, and up to the banks of the Volga near Bogdanovka and Samara. What prevented his ultimate success—also that of the armies of Denikin—was the dissatisfaction of the peasants, who did not receive even from this "White" forlorn hope either land or liberty.

As soon as Kolchak had disappeared from the Crimea a Soviet was established in Sebastopol. Let me explain here

that this Russian term only means a "council", and had been habitually used to designate various institutions of the Tzarist régime, such, for example, as the "Cabinet Council" (*Soviet Ministrov*), the "Council of State" (*Gosoudarstvenni Soviet*), and many other similar civic institutions. The Sebastopol Soviet was supposed to be composed of deputies more or less elected by the workmen, soldiers, and sailors of the city. Commissars were appointed to run the business of government, superseding all the *Zemstvos*, Town Councils, and other organizations of the local Tzarist administration.

The active force of this revolution consisted of the mutinied sailors of the Black Sea fleet, who renewed on a large scale the revolt attempted among them in 1905 by Lieutenant Schmidt. The first thing they did was to revenge themselves on those naval officers who had taken part in the suppression of that earlier revolt, beginning with the judges who had condemned Schmidt and the sailors that followed him, and had taken part in their execution. After having disarmed all the officers of Sebastopol, they arrested and shot a certain number of them, as also many other officers who were, for one reason or another, disliked by the sailors. Thus the old head doctor of the naval hospital was made away with, and several others of our friends and acquaintances, in December 1917.

Two months later the news reached Sebastopol that the Soviet Government had signed with Germany and Turkey, February 18/1 March, 1918, the shameful Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. The news caused universal indignation, and political meetings were held in the streets protesting against it as an act of treason. That very night, about 2 p.m., I was sleeping soundly at home when my wife woke me, saying that armed men were demanding admission to our apartment at the back door. When I went to speak to them they said they wanted me to follow them, but did not explain why or where. If I refused them entrance any longer they

said they would break down the door with their rifle-butts. When I opened the door, four sailors carrying rifles came in. They were in uniform, but the ribbons on their caps were turned in, so as to hide the name of the ship they belonged to. They made no noise, as my wife asked them to keep quiet because our children were asleep. When I was dressed I accompanied the men and my eldest son came with me. A detachment of about twenty sailors was waiting for us in the street, and led us to the cathedral square of St. Vladimir. Here a couple of hundred civilians and naval officers were standing surrounded by armed sailors. I remember how, on our way there, we stopped for a few minutes before a corner-house, where a retired General lived whom they wanted to arrest. But when one of the sailors said, "Oh, I know this man, he's all right," they let him alone.

We were kept waiting for about half an hour on the square until some decision was reached. There seems to have been a revolutionary tribunal sitting at that time in the Naval Club in the lower part of the city. But it was about 3.30 a.m., and I heard someone say, "It is too late." So our group of six men was marched off along the way we had come, leading to the Malakhoff Kourgan. When we reached the corner of our street, the N.C.O. in command, who was no longer the same who had brought us, asked me who I was, and on hearing my name said: "You may go, and I shall give you two sailors to accompany you to your door. And your son may go with you." This escort was given to us because anybody who was not a sailor found on the streets that night was shot at sight. I thanked the sailor and returned, with a grateful heart, to my home and wife. The calm courage with which my son, who was then but fifteen, faced imminent death was admirable. The only way I can explain, under God's will, this act of clemency is that some of these sailors may have been on board the Russian gunboats stationed in

Constantinople while I was Ambassador there. I had of course been always kind and considerate to them, my wife had arranged Christmas-trees for them, and more than once we were present at their amateur theatricals. And in the course of three years about 2,000 sailors must have served at Constantinople.

The rest of our party were led forward about three hundred yards and all shot, as were some two thousand other citizens and naval officers that night. Among the killed were many friends and good acquaintances of ours, and the body of one of them, Major-General de Fabre, was brought on the following day to the city hospital for burial. On that day the other corpses were loaded on barges, as my son saw, taken outside the harbour, and sunk with weights attached to their feet. After the German occupation had restored civil order I became President of a Commission which was appointed to draw up the corpses for identification and burial. The first diver to go down went mad with horror because he saw rows of dead men standing upright at the bottom of the sea and moving to and fro in the current. The corpses were in an advanced state of decomposition, but some could be identified owing to special physical characteristics, and others by their teeth, known to their dentists. Among these victims was a Mohammedan leader from Simferopol.

The civil administration of the Sebastopol Soviet disclaimed all responsibility for these murders, although they continued for some days more. My personal belief is that in this case the sailors were only executioners, and that the wholesale killing had probably been decreed from Moscow, in order to stop all protests against the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. It ought to be added, however, that during that earliest period of Bolshevik rule the *Tcheka*, or secret executive political police, had not yet been introduced in Sebastopol, and that the people enjoyed full liberty in a political sense.

Public meetings were constantly held in Sebastopol, not only in an old circus which had become the principal political place of assembly, but in the public squares and at street corners, the orators of course celebrating the benefits of the revolution. Processions were continually parading the streets with red flags. The red flag was hoisted on all public and many private buildings, as also on the "Palace", where till recently Kolchak had lived. Banners and placards proclaiming freedom were carried about by crowds of men and women, and I remember how on May 1, 1918, a procession celebrating that working-men's holiday and carrying a big banner inscribed "Free Russia" met the German troops as they were just entering the city. I even saw the black flag of anarchism publicly displayed over the entrance to the Anarchists' Club. But this flag, with that of the Bolsheviks, disappeared when the Germans took possession of the town.

The Press was exempt from any kind of control. But, with the exception of some scurrilous illustrated pamphlets attacking the Imperial Family in connection with the scandals of Rasputin, the tone of the Press was quite decent, and I record a fact which speaks highly for Russian morals: no papers or pamphlets of a pornographic character appeared. The newspaper *Krimski Vestnik* continued to appear daily, and I contributed to it then and later a good many articles about the domestic political situation.

All Russian women had become free citizens, the equals of the men. This, however, did not seem to impress them very much, although they had likewise become voters in all political and municipal elections. The Sebastopol Town Council was soon to be elected on the basis of proportional representation. The ladies of my household took part with me in this election and, thanks to that system, we and our friends succeeded in electing one member of the Council, Father Smirnoff, a notable priest and preacher of the Fleet.

I came in touch with two of the Sebastopol Commissars, those of Finance and of Public Instruction. The former, who was evidently a retired N.C.O. Paymaster-Clerk of the Fleet, had to supervise all the banking institutions of Sebastopol. It is true that this was made easy for him because all private deposits in all the banks (including the savings banks—a great shame!) had been confiscated. Transfer operations were however continued, and I wanted to send to a niece of mine, who was a widow with three children in Kislovodsk in the Northern Caucasus, some money of which she stood in dire need. The best way of talking to the Commissar was to waylay him while he was walking to the Bank; for, being unacquainted with the way of organizing his work, he was quite invisible in office hours. All my efforts came to nothing and the money could not be sent.

Things were different in the domain of Public Instruction. Bolshevism had from the very beginning shown openly its anti-religious tendencies. "Church and State" had been separated, and the former received no more subsidies from the latter. Under the Imperial Government the Greek Orthodox Church was officially the dominant Church in the Empire, but all legally recognized creeds, such as the Roman Catholic and Protestant Confessions, as also the Mohammedan and Buddhist subjects of the Tzar, received regular subsidies from the State, and an order was published in Sebastopol prescribing that for every church in the town a list of its parishioners was to be drawn up. If they were less than five hundred, the church was to be closed and its property used for some other purpose. Thus it was expected that the Cathedral of St. Vladimir, where the heroes of the Crimean War are buried, would become a school of art.

I remember going because of this order to our parish church near our house, to inscribe my name and those of my wife and her mother on the list of its parishioners. Many citizens were assembled there on the same errand, and as

some of the peasant men and women were illiterate, I was asked to write down their names for them. When I was doing this one of the crowd said: "Do you know that all those whose names are on this list will be killed?" "What does that matter?" replied an elderly housewife, "they [the Bolsheviks] will enter this church only over my dead body." The registration continued and not a single church was closed, since all were found to have more than the necessary number of parishioners.

At the same time Parish Councils (Soviets) were formed for each church on the initiative of the parishioners, presided over by the parish priest. They had been legally instituted many years before, but had somehow fallen into abeyance. Now they came to life again and took into their hands the parish finances and the care of the churches. This they did with such success that the interesting military church of St. Michael, where my wife and I became members of the Council (men and women now having equal rights), was not only able to continue the regular church services but could soon afford a better choir than formerly. The church was visited daily by many working-men on their way to and from their work. So the parish ladies agreed that from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. each of them would remain on duty in the church for two hours, sweeping and dusting it, selling church candles and recording the applications for special services. This system worked perfectly to the general satisfaction.

Presently another delicate question cropped up. As all schools were to be secularized, the teaching of religion, which had hitherto been one of the required courses, was to stop. Private lessons, if desired, were not prohibited, only they must henceforth be given, not in the schools, but in private houses. At once a meeting of the Council of Parents was called at the Girls' High School, where I was a member because I had a niece in that school. An inquiry was opened

as to which parents wished religious instruction to be given to their children. The result was that of the 253 parents who had girls at that school only three declared that they did not wish religion taught. All the others desired the continuation of religious instruction and were ready to pay their part of the necessary fees. As, however, in no private house in Sebastopol could room be found for such a great number of pupils, the parents asked that the children be permitted to take their lessons in religion in the school building, though not officially and without any marks being given by the priest to his pupils. The Commissar for Education granted this request.

The murders of Sebastopol citizens by mutinied sailors took place only at night. In the daytime the sailors searched the houses of civilians for hidden arms. A certain amount of disagreement and ill feeling could be noticed between the sailors and the workmen of the naval dockyards. So when the citizens of Sebastopol called a meeting to discuss the institution of a special constabulary in the city, with the intention of preventing the renewal of any such atrocities, we found a sympathetic echo in that part of the town where these workmen lived. A plan of organization was duly drawn up. The town was divided into a number of sections, each of which was to be patrolled by a sufficient number of its own inhabitants under the command of chiefs elected by them. The patrol duty began at 9 p.m. and continued till daylight. The section in which our house was situated was under the command of Major-General Kolzakoff, who had distinguished himself as commander of a Siberian Cossack regiment on the Austrian Front, and had been decorated with the Officers' Cross of St. George and the British D.S.O. My son and I both volunteered, and I became one of the platoon commanders. Such special constables wore no distinctive sign, but were armed with rifles and a sufficient number of cartridges. These arms were allowed

us by the Sebastopol Soviet, and we knew that a reserve of two hundred armed men was to be found in the workmen's quarters of the town.

This organization worked well. It preserved peace at night, and even held the city successfully against the Red Guard, which when retreating before the German Corps of Occupation tried to take the town. I remember being on duty when the German advance-guard occupied the northern side of Sebastopol Bay. On the same night the Russian Admiral Sablin led all that remained of the Black Sea fleet out of the bay in spite of the German fire. I remember also how the Germans entered Sebastopol on the morning of May 1st in perfect marching order, but covered with dust and looking very tired. They were coldly received by the population, in contrast with their reception in Kieff. One detachment bivouacked for half an hour opposite our house. They soon hoisted the German flag on the "Palace", and placed machine-guns and light artillery at all the important strategical points of the city. These were so well known to the Germans that they entered the apartment in which lived the wife of Admiral Pogouliaeff, ex-Naval Agent in Paris, and said to her, "There is a balcony here on which we shall put a machine-gun." They did so, and thus obtained command of the whole slope leading from the dockyards into the residential quarters of the city.

The Germans immediately disbanded our special constabulary and ordered all arms of every kind to be handed over to them. A sailor in whose house a revolver was found two days later was court-martialled and shot. The conduct of the German troops in Sebastopol was perfectly orderly. They requisitioned nothing, but in the course of the first two or three days they bought up all the provisions in the shops of Sebastopol, and also all the fats and all the soap they could find. I believe all this was sent to Germany, and every soldier was ordered to send home once a week a box

of provisions, of a special form and transported by the Government, to his people at home. From that day till after the Armistice and the evacuation of the Crimea six months later by the German troops exemplary order prevailed.

About two weeks before the Germans came, elections had been held for membership in the Sebastopol Soviet. Its new members proved so much more moderate than their predecessors that these refused to resign, and thus, up to the 1st of May, when the Germans came, we had in Sebastopol two Soviets, neither of which was strong enough to oust the other. I mention this circumstance to show how the more moderate elements of the population, making use of their rights as voters, succeeded in maintaining there a revolutionary but by no means communistic administration. It was only later that the Moscow Soviet Government began to introduce Communism in the place of Bolshevism.

A very striking experience connected with the effort of integral Communism to suppress all private trade was told me in 1920 by an exile, an old Russian lady, Princess Tenisheff, who had lived in the town of Orel, near Moscow, under the Bolsheviks, until it was taken by the "White" Army of Denikin and she could leave. Towards the end of 1918 she wanted to buy herself a calendar for the coming year. She entered a store where books were being sold and asked for a calendar. Some girls were there who demanded rudely, "Have you a permit?" "No," said she gently, "I did not know that one was necessary." "Now that you know, go and get one," the girls said, and told her where to apply for it. The Princess went there at once and found a long queue of people waiting at the entrance to the bureau. She took her stand next to a peasant woman, who, while they were waiting, asked her what she wanted to buy. On learning it was merely a calendar the woman was astonished that she should take all this trouble for such a small matter. "I am a seamstress," continued the woman, "and am coming

here now for the third time to be allowed to buy needles." Being kind-hearted, she advised the lady not to wait there, but to come on the following morning at eight, when there might be fewer people waiting. The Princess did so, and after being sent more than once from one clerk to another and spending two roubles in revenue stamps, she obtained at last a written permit to buy a calendar. She returned to the book-store and, on showing the document, was shown some calendars, one of which was particularly recommended as bearing the portrait of Lenin. She asked, however, for something simpler with floral ornaments, and at last got her calendar, paying one and a half roubles for it. A system which obliged a seamstress to apply for a written permit to buy needles could not possibly work, as Lenin himself recognized when he introduced the N.E.P. (New Economic Policy), admitting certain forms at least of private trade. It appears that this policy of the State monopoly of trade is as dangerous for the economic success of Bolshevism as the question of private property in land, of which I have already spoken.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

## AN INTERESTING EXPERIMENT IN RUSSIAN FEDERATION

My duties as Senator only required my presence in St. Petersburg now and then, so I was able to spend the greater part of my time in Bogdanovka, introducing there some useful agricultural innovations, and the winter months in Sebastopol, where the mild climate better suited my wife and small children. In October 1918 I became a member of the Crimean Provincial Government, formed by General Sulkevitch when inner peace and order had been re-established by the Germans upon their occupation of the Crimea. Their advance drove away the Bolsheviks and they entered Sebastopol on May 1, 1918. They were interested principally in the military aspect of their occupation. This they began with Kieff, where they were enthusiastically welcomed. Thence they spread their troops over the Ukraine and the Crimea, and even sent a detachment of infantry to Poti, a port on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. It was popularly rumoured that the Germans, still hoping to win the war, intended to strike at Great Britain by pushing an armed force on from there through Persia and Afghanistan into India. In the Crimea the German G.H.Q. studiously abstained from governing the country, leaving that task to its inhabitants. Thus, when the remnants of the group of liberal members of the local *Zemstvo* and Town Councils refused to form a Government, the Germans favoured and supported the effort, made by General Sulkevitch, to govern the country by means of Ministers representing the various elements of the population—Russians, Mohammedans, and German colonists—forming together a Provincial Cabinet.

General Sulkevitch was a very interesting man. He was a Mohammedan, descended from those Tartar conquerors of Russia who had settled in the fourteenth century on the

borders of Poland, had acquired land and the status of nobility there, and had fully adopted Russian culture. These gentlemen, like all Mohammedans in Russia, had absolutely equal rights with the Russians themselves in matters of education and of military and civil service, which made it possible for them to graduate from Russian high schools, universities, and military schools, and rise to the highest ranks of the military and civil administrations without changing their religion. Thus, during the War of Liberation, I met Major-General Djenghis Khan, a direct descendant of the great conqueror, who was on the Emperor's Staff as head of the Telegraph and Postal Department of the Army in Bulgaria. He was a noble of our Province of Samara, where he possessed considerable estates. In Central Asia Colonel Alikhanoff, who became first Russian Governor of Merv, was a Russian Mohammedan of princely descent from the Caucasus, and in Central Asia I have known many other Mohammedan officers of various ranks doing well in the administration. The Tartars of Western Russia were particularly distinguished for their mental capabilities. When my father was Governor of Minsk, his Chief of Chancery, a graduate of St. Petersburg University, belonged to this group. His work was highly satisfactory, and he later obtained considerable advancement among the higher employees of the Ministry of the Interior, remaining all the time a Mohammedan.

General Sulkevitch was educated at a Russian military school and graduated later from the Academy of the General Staff. When, towards the end of the Great War, an army corps was formed exclusively of Russian Mohammedans, Lieutenant-General Sulkevitch was put in command of it. This corps did some excellent fighting on the Western Front, and remained to the end impervious to Socialist and Bolshevik propaganda. It retired in full order into the Ukraine, and was disbanded there in 1918.

The Provincial Government formed by Sulkevitch in Simferopol, capital of the Crimea, comprised several Mohammedans. The Minister of Justice was Senator Akhmatovitch, a distinguished lawyer, whose specialty was the civil law of France. The Attorney-General was a Mohammedan of Western Russia, a highly gifted graduate of St. Petersburg University. The Minister of War was a colonel belonging to the same group. Lastly, the Minister of Domains—a very important factor in the Crimea—was a Crimean nobleman of Tartar race. The other Ministers were Russians. A seat in the Cabinet was reserved for a notable German colonist, but circumstances did not allow him to accept it. In the summer of 1918 General Sulkevitch came to Sebastopol and paid me a visit. We had a long talk in which he explained his policy, saying that all he wished was to be remembered some day as “a good *dvornik*” (caretaker), who had helped to preserve for the Russian State its jewel, the Crimea. I was deeply impressed by this modest and honest statement of principle, and when in October he asked me to join his Cabinet I willingly accepted, being in full agreement with his political programme.

I really think that the Crimea could have been made a model member of a Russian Federation. Its population numbered only 850,000, of whom about one-third were Tartar landholders and agriculturists inhabiting chiefly the southern part of the peninsula, cultivating mostly orchards and vineyards. In the north many thrifty and prosperous German colonists, who were the decided and active enemies of Bolshevism, and some purely Russian peasants and landowners, grew wheat and bred sheep. The beautiful southern Riviera was studded with the villas of the richest nobles and industrialists of Russia. All the population was well-to-do. Even the workmen of the State dockyards and munition factories in Sebastopol, numbering about 20,000, could hardly be called proletarians, because most of them

owned small houses in the town. Thus the economic and financial outlook of the Crimea was excellent, and it seemed quite feasible to institute in that province a system of political freedom and democratic parliamentary government. This was actually decided on, preparations were made by General Sulkevitch's Government to introduce it, and the elections for the new Crimean Diet were to take place on December 10, 1918.

The particular reason why General Sulkevitch wished for my co-operation was because he had received from Kieff a proposal concerning the union of the Crimea and the Ukraine under a single Government. This question was to be discussed at a meeting of delegates to take place in Kieff, for which my diplomatic experience seemed to make my services desirable. The post of Minister of Public Instruction being then vacant and the General and his colleagues thinking me capable of filling it, I was appointed to this post. I was also placed in charge of the Foreign Affairs of the Crimea because the Minister, a young Crimean Mohammedan with a wonderful talent for public speaking, was at that time in Berlin, negotiating, I believe, with the German Government about certain commercial questions. As he was not expected to return, I was asked to draw up a draft of instructions for the Crimean delegation which was to proceed to Kieff. This draft was fully approved by the Cabinet, and after obtaining from the Ukrainian Government the preliminary opening of the frontier, thus allowing the Crimea to export all her fruit-crop of that year, our delegation, presided over by Senator Akhmatovitch, arrived in Kieff and began the negotiations concerning federation. By a curious freak of chance we were welcomed at the Kieff railway station by a young Turkoman officer of the Hetman's staff, wearing the same uniform of the Turkoman militia which had become familiar to me in Merv thirty-five years before, with the tall black sheepskin busby, red epaulettes,

and crooked sword. This Mohammedan was a pupil in a Russian military school, spoke Russian as well as myself, and had acquired Russian culture to perfection. He was a descendant of one of those Turkoman chiefs who had fought against Russia at Gueoktepe and had welcomed General Komaroff in Merv.

The negotiations were conducted in the usual diplomatic forms as between two neighbouring, friendly, and independent countries. We soon saw that what the Ukrainian Government wanted was the simple annexation of the Crimea. We, on the other hand, proposed a system of federation, with a Central Government in Kieff for Foreign Affairs, Finance, Railways, and Justice, while all other matters of economic and cultural interest were to be freely administered in the Crimea by its own Provincial Government. I believe that such a scheme not only fitted the practical needs at that time of the Crimea and Southern Russia generally, but might have been—and still may some day be—applied to a free and decentralized renascent Russian State, the political capital of which should be, I think, neither St. Petersburg nor Moscow, but once more Kieff, “the Mother of Russian Towns”.

In about three weeks an agreement in essentials had been reached, in spite of the great difference in power between the contracting parties. The Crimea had only 850,000 inhabitants and one regiment of cavalry, while the Ukraine counted some 23,000,000 inhabitants and had a large standing army. But war was at all costs to be avoided, because such was the wish not only of the Ukrainian Hetman Skoropadsky, who was at heart a Russian patriot, and of General Sulkevitch, but also of the German Government. For this negotiation was started with the full approval of the German G.H.Q., and conducted under the supervision of a member of the German General Staff, the Prince of Reuss. In him the Crimean delegation invariably found an unbiased and sympathetic supporter.

One can scarcely credit the actual reason why this agreement remained unsigned. The Crimean delegation, when ready to sign, declared that the agreement would at once be submitted for approval to the new Crimean Diet, which was to meet in December. But the Ukrainian Government insisted that our signatures should have binding power without being approved by the Diet. The Ukrainian Minister of the Interior was so opposed to our liberal and parliamentary point of view on this subject that he said to me: "We have fortunately no Parliament in the Ukraine," and added: "But if there were one, I would have had it shot." This objection not being foreseen by our credentials, our negotiations were interrupted though not broken off. Senator Akhmatovitch went to his home in Poland and I remained as head of the delegation, which was reinforced by the coming of some Crimean gentlemen of Tartar race, and by the written opinion of some of the Russian Representatives of the *Zemstvos* and Municipalities. Later I returned to the Crimea, leaving one of our delegates to negotiate with certain Ukrainian Ministers concerning the adjustment of some urgent local non-political questions. Sulkevitch and his Cabinet fully approved what their delegates had done, and I prepared a full report on this negotiation, with all the documents relating to it, in the form of a Blue Book to be laid before the Crimean Diet. I may add that this book had a blue cover, not because we wanted to imitate in this respect British parliamentary procedure, but because blue was the colour of the standards of Tamerlane and of the antique Tartar and Mongol national assemblies.

My personal impressions of this visit to "Independent Ukraine" were of a mixed character. In spite of its new name, this land remained as before an integral part of Russia. The Ukrainian language, invented by the Austrians for the use of their Galician subjects and for the anti-Russian propaganda centred in the "Ruthenian" University of Lemberg

—the old Russian city of Lvov—was neither known nor understood even by the majority of the Ukrainian Ministers in Kieff, differing completely from that harmonious and poetical South Russian dialect in which wrote Shevtchenko, the Burns of “Little Russia”, and of which my mother was so fond. All these Ministers were graduates of Russian universities, had been till recently employees of the Russian State, and were just as Russian as I was. Our negotiations were conducted throughout, and the Minutes were drawn up, in Russian. The Hetman was free to govern the Ukraine as he liked, but peace and order were maintained there by the presence of the German troops of occupation. The situation of the peasants and their relations with the land-owners had remained as before the war, and “land and liberty” was just as far away as ever.

Kieff was full of refugees from St. Petersburg and Central Russia, including many of my friends and their families. Food was plentiful and all kinds of goods could be bought at relatively moderate prices. I was glad to be able to buy myself a good felt hat and some linen—all such things being unprocurable in Sebastopol, but clothes were still very expensive and difficult to obtain. So I remember lending a colleague of the Crimean delegation one of my frock-coats and a waistcoat, made for me by my London tailor before the war, which happened to fit this gentleman perfectly. It is terrible to think that this flourishing city was to become, only a year later, after the German collapse, the scene of those horrible murders and devastations perpetrated alternately by Petlura and the Bolsheviks. Such a fate the Crimea escaped by remaining separate from the Ukraine.

The enemies of Russia expected and hoped that with the downfall of the central unifying power of the Tzar, Russia would fall to pieces. To-day, after a crucial experience of twelve years, one can see why this did not happen. Even when St. Petersburg and Moscow were seized by inter-

national and anti-national Bolshevism and Communism the outlying provinces of Russia stood up and fought for the unity of the Russian State. "White" armies with the battle-cry of "*Edinaya, Nedelimaya*" (Russia One and Undivided) marched from the Crimea, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Siberia, Archangel, and Riga against the internationalists. At the time when I was Ambassador in Constantinople a rich Bokhara merchant whom I had known in Central Asia came to see me and said: "You could hardly believe the progress which has been accomplished in Central Asia since you left. Now Bokhara and Moscow are one city." He meant that these two economic and industrial centres had become so closely united that they could no more be divided than a city against itself. Such is also the case with Siberia. Fifty years ago my father, who had travelled a great deal there, was rather anxious about Siberian separatist tendencies. But this was before the building of the Trans-Siberian Railway, which, in combination with the other Russian railways and with the help of Witte's *Zonentarif*,<sup>1</sup> soon welded the peoples of all Russia into one homogeneous mass. Besides, there are no natural barriers which could serve as frontiers between one part of Russia and another, from the Baltic to the Black Sea and from Poland to the Pacific.

It is true that the excessive bureaucratic centralization of the St. Petersburg period of Russian history has given rise to the Bolshevik plan of dividing Russia into separate States and of depriving her even of her name. Instead of "Russia" there is said to exist only the "U.S.S.R." (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics). This is of good augury for the future, for it is not in Russia's name that those things

<sup>1</sup> This system of "tariff zones" was first introduced on the Hungarian railways. Passengers pay less per mile for long distances than for short ones. Its introduction into Russia greatly facilitated and encouraged the intermingling of inhabitants of widely separated provinces. It thus helped to eradicate political separatism.

which are now happening there are undertaken, nor can Russia be held responsible for them. But the present division of Russia on apparently ethnographical principles is wholly artificial, because this division does not correspond to any essential economic or political differences. And some day a correct balance will be found between the centralization of the Tzardom and the decentralization of the Bolsheviks—a balance which will secure for the Russian State permanent unity, and yet for each of its federated parts a free system of local self-government. Something like this is being achieved by the British Empire, which is the first great State to hold its parts together, not by compulsion but by liberty. Only in Russia the interdependence of its various parts will be closer and more tangible, because these parts are not separated by the Seven Seas, but form geographically one territorial unit.





## “WHITE” EXILES IN CONSTANTINOPLE

In February 1919 a meeting was held in Sebastopol by the representatives of various Russian private organizations which had been helping the Tzarist Government with the supply work during the Great War. These wished now to do the same for the volunteer army of General Denikin, then preparing for its great offensive against Moscow. I was invited to take part in this gathering, and thus became acquainted with very full and interesting statistical and other information on this subject. It was ascertained that Denikin's army could be supplied with all the necessary quantities of foodstuffs by the Crimea and its adjacent northern districts. But, as the Black Sea Straits had been closed since the beginning of the Great War, nothing had been imported all that while into the Crimea from abroad, nor had anything been brought into the Crimea from the interior of Russia since the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917. Now, however, that the Straits were open, it became possible to obtain, not only the necessary equipment and ammunition for Denikin's army, but also manufactured goods of all kinds for the civilian population, which could now be expected to flow from abroad into this starved market.

One of the important institutions represented at this meeting was the *Prodmogor*, which I have already mentioned. It was directed at that time by a very active and enterprising Moscow merchant, Barykoff, whose acquaintance I now made and to whom I suggested that this would be just the right time to send a representative of the *Prodmogor* to Constantinople, to buy there at first hand what was needed by the civilian inhabitants of the Crimea. This idea, which was warmly advocated also by the secretary of the *Prodmogor*,

Jordansky, was regarded so favourably that Barykoff asked me to be its representative in Constantinople, and sent me there as delegate with the necessary instructions, accompanied by Jordansky as secretary. A considerable British squadron was then at anchor in Sebastopol Bay, and a destroyer took me and my little staff to Constantinople. I did not know at all what I would find there. News had been circulated in the Crimea that the Sultan and his Government had crossed the Bosphorus and fixed their residence in Broussa in Asia Minor. So I was rather surprised when, on entering the harbour I knew so well, I saw the Turkish flag there as usual, but with British, French, and Italian flags also displayed on numerous men-of-war representing the Allied Powers in occupation of Constantinople and the Straits. In 1919 the Ottoman Empire existed no more. It is not even mentioned in the Treaty of Versailles. What remained of Turkey was being systematically divided among the victorious Allies, as can be seen from the Treaty of Sèvres, which was duly signed by the plenipotentiaries of the Sultan of Turkey.

Russian interests at Constantinople were in charge of the Dutch Government. The palatial building of the Russian Embassy had been turned, with the consent of the Dutch, into the French G.H.Q., and I saw a French flag flying on it. It is interesting, however, to note that the Swedish Government, which was in charge of German interests, did not permit any of the Allies to occupy the German Embassy buildings in Constantinople. The "White" Russian Government was then represented by young Serafimoff, who had been a Secretary of our Embassy while I was Ambassador, and whom I prized highly for his intelligence, energy, and acquaintance with the local languages. He had entered officially as an Attaché of the Dutch Legation, but by dint of hard work, tact, and patience had succeeded within a few months in freeing our Embassy from its military guest.

and in hoisting the Russian national flag over a part, at least, of that building.

The tide of Russian emigration, which I had already noted in Kieff, was now beginning to reach Constantinople. Here a small private committee of Russians was started by Maksmoff, former dragoman of our Embassy, and his wife, to help those of the refugees who were destitute. This committee soon increased in importance, being the only institution of its kind until the arrival, about a year later, of the American Red Cross and the Russian Red Cross, and the founding of the Anglo-Russian Refugee Bureau. I was asked to become a member of this committee and was made its Vice-President, our idea being that it ought to be presided over by a lady. Serafimoff and I helped each other in our respective tasks. We worked so hard that Serafimoff became consumptive, and I had to give up all my public activities in February 1922 because of failing health. I am glad to say that Serafimoff, after spending more than a year at Davos, recovered completely and is now the "White" Russian representative in Bulgaria.

The successive evacuations of Odessa, the Caucasus, and the Crimea brought each an ever-increasing influx of refugees to Constantinople. While the evacuation of Odessa was taking place the French Commander-in-Chief in Constantinople, General, now Marshal, Franchet d'Esperey, asked me to come and see him, wishing me to tell him what I knew about the situation in Southern Russia, where French troops were showing themselves incapable of holding their ground. I am afraid what I told the French General was not pleasant hearing for him, because the French soldiers and sailors in Southern Russia were themselves being undermined by Bolshevik propaganda and did not live up to the hopes of the Russian civilian population in them.

The second wave of emigration followed on the discomfiture of General Denikin and the terrible evacuation of

Novorossisk in March 1920. Those who arrived from there told harrowing tales of what was happening. Among the civilian refugees there were also many officials with their families, and even whole boys' and girls' schools. Part of these immigrants were taken charge of by the British and distributed to camps in Lemnos, Cyprus, and Egypt.

But the greatest influx of Russians into Constantinople took place in November 1920, when the last stand made by Baron Wrangel against the Bolsheviks in the Crimea broke down. He himself arrived with about 50,000 troops and 60,000 refugees. In the streets of Constantinople Russian uniforms and language were for a time predominant, and one could certainly speak of the peaceful Russian occupation of the city. The troops were camped in Gallipoli, while what remained of the Russian Black Sea fleet was interned, with its personnel and schools, by the French in the African port of Bizerta.

With Wrangel arrived the members of his Government, over which he continued to preside, and which set about liquidating all such institutions as the *Prodmogor*, which I had represented. It had proved rather successful, sending to the Crimea shiploads of what was needed there, and selling in Constantinople for the first time the celebrated Russian cement of Novorossisk. In April 1919 I had also been appointed President of the Russian Commercial Committee by the Minister of Commerce in Ekaterinodar. This organization also was now dissolved. But upon receiving my salary as delegate and president, and with the help of some valuables we had succeeded in saving from the débâcle, I was able to buy, for my wife and family, a small house and garden on the Bosphorus on the outskirts of Constantinople, where we are still living.

The very first help for the Russian refugees who arrived by thousands with General Wrangel was given in the shape of food and water by the British and French Govern-

ments. Then the Americans stepped in and organized on a broad and permanent scale the supply of food, clothing, and medical comforts to the destitute refugees. One of the great difficulties which the Russian exiles here have had to contend with is the question of the education of their children. In this task we have been greatly helped by American generosity. Robert College, the Constantinople College for Women, and other American educational institutions have received many Russian pupils, who, it may be remarked, have done very good work in them. I shall never forget the kindness of Mr. Charles R. Crane, of New York, whom I had known for many years, in helping to give my younger son and my daughter a full course of education. British private capital helped to open a Russian school for boys, and the Russian institutions which arrived with Wrangel also cared for the Russian education of our youth.

Baroness Wrangel presided over an influential committee for assisting Russian refugees. Her mother was one of the daughters of that Mme Katkoff who was my mother's bosom friend, so I was glad to help this committee as Vice-President in its useful work. The American Near East Relief is a splendid organization, which has helped the Russians also, although its principal task is the care of Armenian and Greek refugees. The American Red Cross did a great work here, principally helping women, children, and the sick, while several private institutions were actively represented here, such as "Save the Children Fund" and others.

In the meantime Turkey has been renovated by the Government of Mustapha Kemal Pasha, who established the Turkish Republic, a lay and democratic State. This has repulsed the Greek invader and obtained, by the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, its recognition as an absolutely free and independent State. Recognition was followed by the evacuation by the Allies of Constantinople and the Straits. At that time all the "White" Russians residing in Turkey

received from the Angora Government permits of residence, in which they are termed political refugees under the protection of the Turkish State. This situation continues up to the present day, though very many "White" Russians have left Turkey and continue leaving it for other countries with the help of a representative of the League of Nations and of several private American well-wishers.

If one wishes to know how the "White" Russians live in Constantinople, one should read the accurate account of it in the well-written book of an American lady, *Undaunted Exiles*, by Eugenia Bumgardner, which appeared in the United States in 1924, I believe. The dominant principle of this life is work. Not one of us, whatever may have been his state in life before the Revolution, can afford now to live without working. Russian exiles teach and practise all they know or have ever learned—languages, mathematics, science, book-keeping, literature, instrumental and vocal music (followed by the introduction of the wonderful Russian choral music into the Greek Church), various forms of commerce and industry, dressmaking, restaurant-keeping and serving, cooking, photography, medicine and surgery, carpentry, cabinet-making, masonry, acting, dancing, fine art, etc.

As an example of Russian versatility, here is a list of eighteen occupations actually practised here during the last ten years by a friend of mine who fought all through the Great War and the civil wars with the rank of Captain of the Guard Cavalry, and who is even now only thirty-three years of age (arranged in strict chronological sequence): groom, night-watchman, caretaker, madhouse orderly, gymnastic instructor, in charge of hospital stoves, head hospital orderly, in charge of burials, store-keeper, commission-agent's porter, teacher of gymnastics for ladies, model, ballet-dancer, bowling-alley keeper, tennis-court caretaker, carpenter, gardener, and for the last three years

a permanent situation in a school as teacher of fencing and gymnastics. All this work and enterprise of "White" Russians has been welcomed by renascent Turkey, and repays in part the hospitality tendered us.

Since my retirement from public life my only work has been contributing political and historical articles to English and French magazines, and rewriting and bringing up to date my book, *The Limits of Human Thought, a Lesson in Humility*, for which I still hope, some day, to find a publisher. I have heard that in Japan, when a man is seventy, his relatives present him with a new robe and do not let him work any more. It is a pity this usage cannot be followed by the "White" Russian exiles of our day. For we all have to go on labouring as best we can as long as we are spared.



## E P I L O G U E

Russia cannot be destroyed. Her dynasty, her nobility, her *intelligentsia*, and many of her best workmen have been decimated, terrorized, or exiled, so that these valuable political and cultural forces are temporarily in abeyance. But the 120 millions of Russian peasants remain where they were and, in their immense majority, what they were. The Russian peasant is patient, long-suffering, and strong. His tireless plough has changed into arable land the backwoods and steppes of primitive Russia from the Baltic to the Pacific. He has outlived the Mongol yoke, the autocratic system of universal serfdom, the half-hearted reforms of the Tzar Liberator, and the experiment of a packed *Duma*. He lives now under the shadow of alien, fanatical Communism and, being again practically reduced to serfdom, is yet to suffer under a process of tyrannical vivisection during the newly invented Bolshevik *quinquennium* (1929–1933). This also he will outlive, and see its end. But until he obtains what he has always wanted—"land and liberty"—and as long as Russia continues to be half-starved, half-ruined, financially unreliable, half-paralysed as to her import and export trade, and totally addicted to revolutionary communist propaganda abroad, while foreign Governments are toying with the Bolshevik menace, the world will know no security and no rest.

Some day, however, the Russian peasant will come into his own, and the Russian State will emerge, renovated and chastened, from its terrible trials. Then, I believe, it will be possible for the Russian and British Governments to broach once more the subject of normal, neighbourly, friendly, and trusty political and economic relations between them, in Asia and also in Europe, to the study of which a great part of my life has been devoted. They will become more than ever desirable and necessary in view of Russia's

prolonged hungering for foreign industrial produce and for economic and political stability in Asia, and of Great Britain's complicated troubles with India and Unemployment. In the past Russia was a fine market for British wares and, politically, both countries have succeeded in securing for themselves and their dependencies for more than half a century, and in spite of great difficulties, good-neighbourly tranquillity in Central Asia. Such was the outcome of the Gortchacoff-Granville *entente* of 1872, and of the Isvolsky-Nicolson Convention of 1907. If authoritative, moderating, and pacific influences of this kind are put in the place of the present revolutionary Bolshevik propaganda of race-hatred and class-war among Asiatic tribes and peoples, the task of British Duarchy in India might be lightened. At the same time the reopening of the vast Russian market to private inner and outer commerce could have a direct and favourable bearing on Unemployment. But to make anything like this possible one essential condition is indispensable: both sides must know and be perfectly sure that their policy and practice in applying the agreements concluded between them will be based on the bed-rock of those elementary principles on the maintenance of which the prosperity of mankind depends—the principles of liberty, property, law, order, and peace.

*June 1930*



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